



ON SET WITH THE WOMAN IN BLACK: ANGEL OF DEATH

256

THE WORLD'S
#1
SCI-FI MAG

BLACK MIRROR

Charlie Brooker's festive techno terror

EX_MACHINA

Alex Garland reinvents the movie robot

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEWS!

DOCTOR WHO

Peter Capaldi and Steven Moffat know what you're getting for Christmas!

★
**SUPERHERO
INVASION!**

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SUPERMAN



WONDER WOMAN

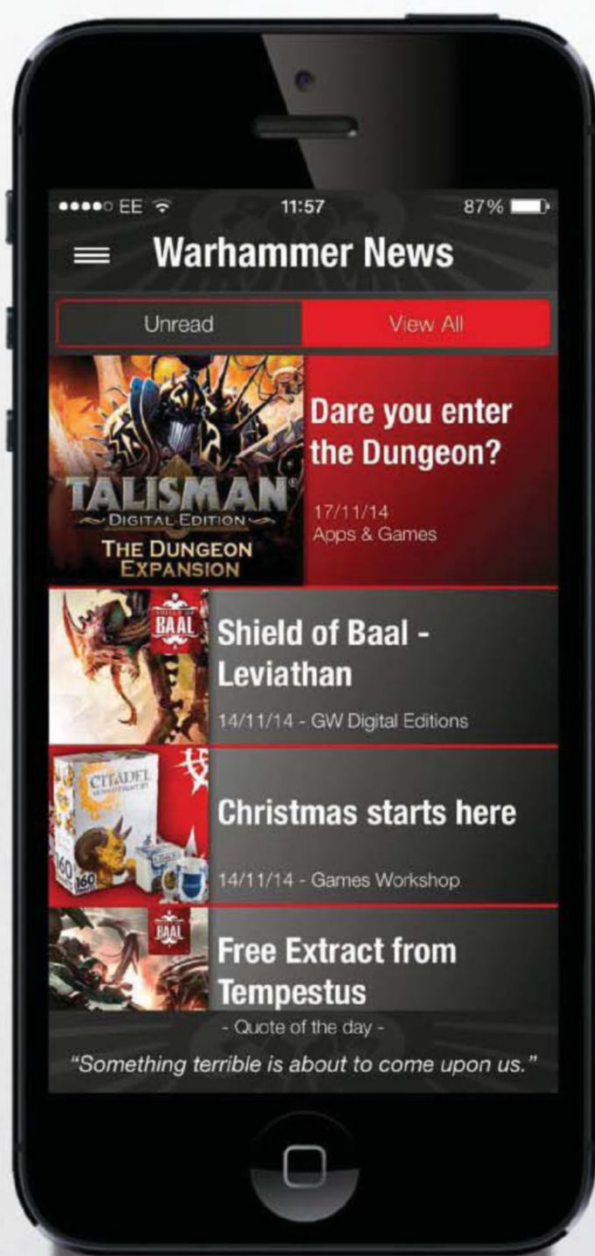
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Future

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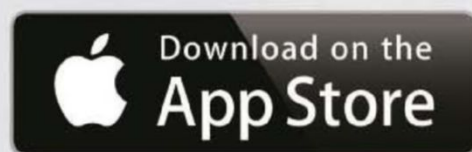
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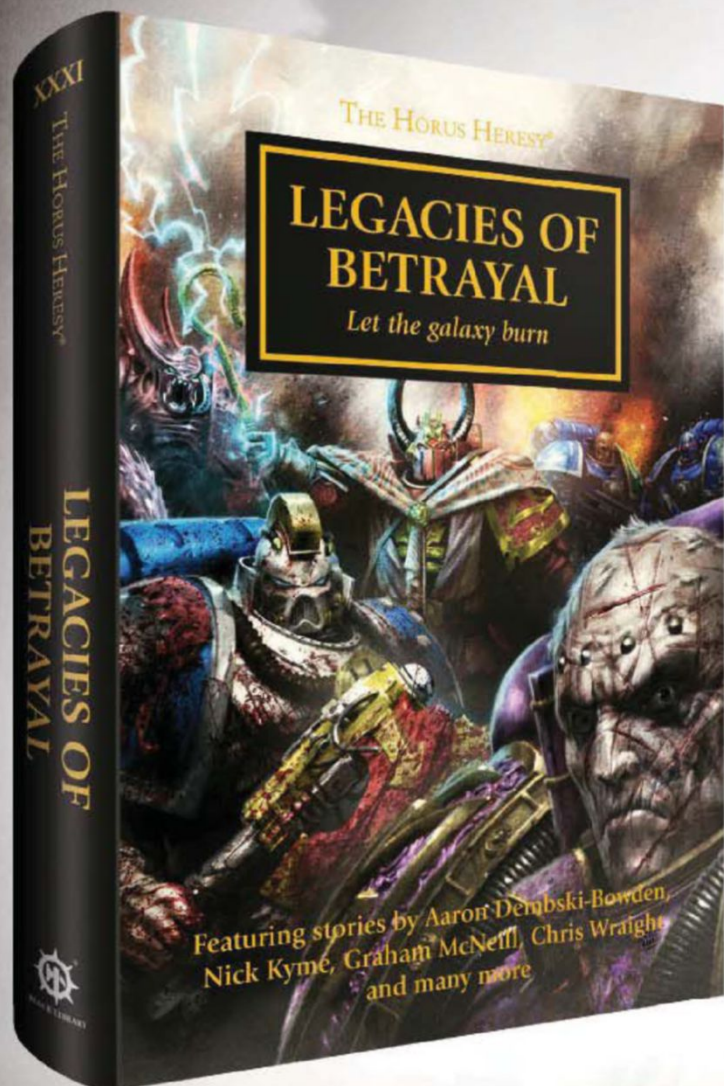
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"A **CHILLING** LAYER OF REAL,
VERY HUMAN ANXIETY"

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AFTER THE CEREMONY COMES THE RITUAL

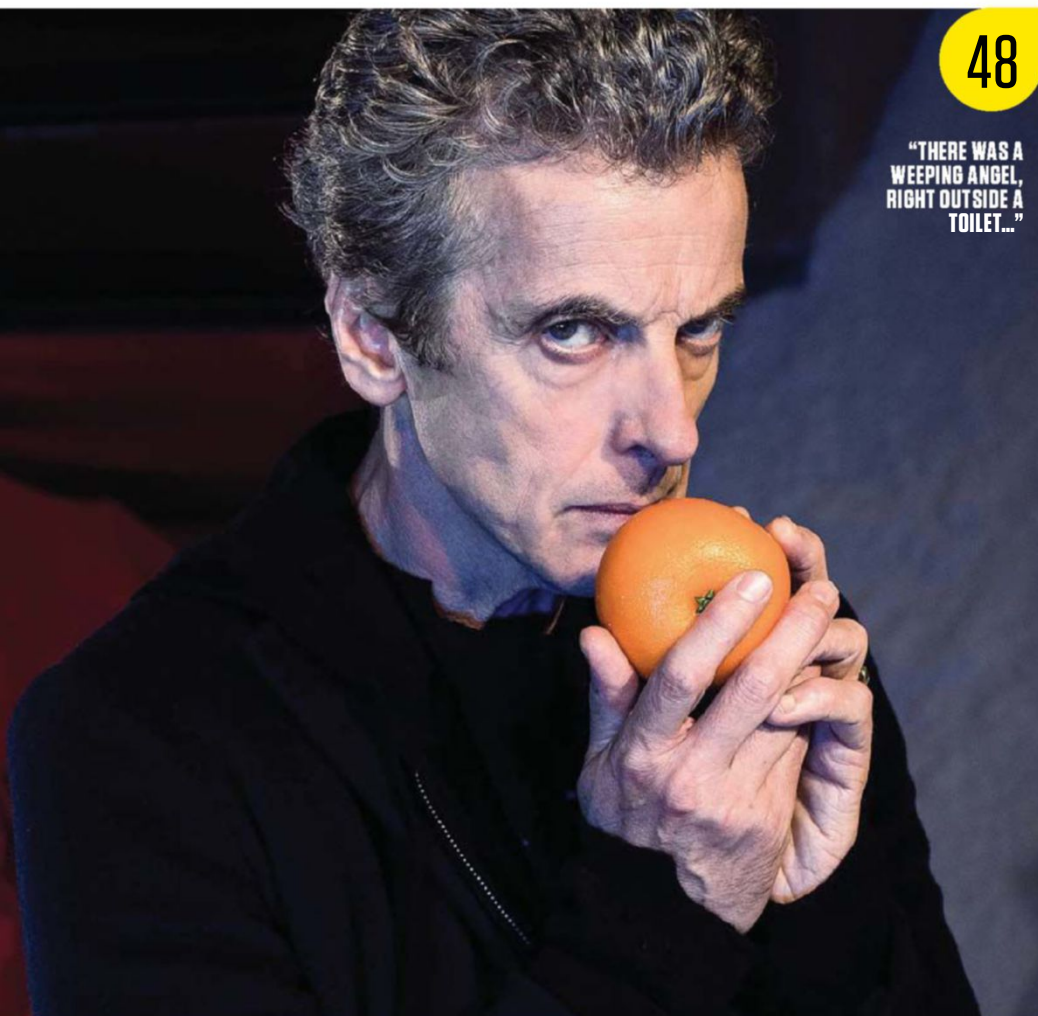
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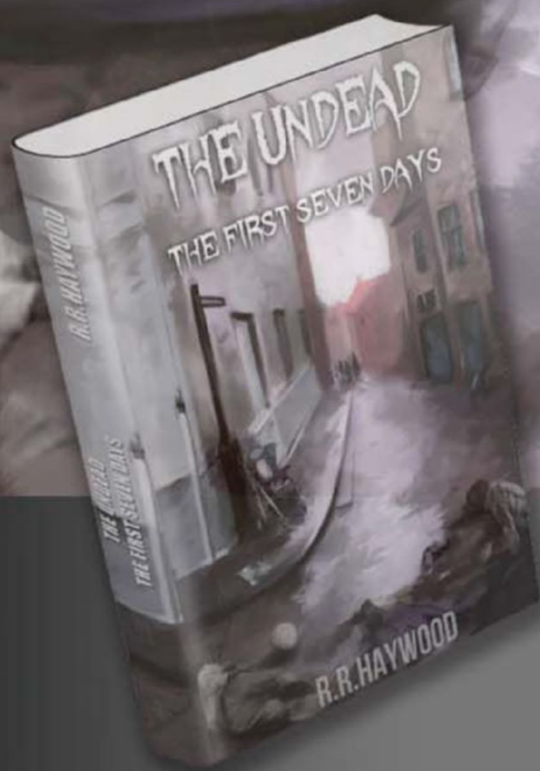
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THE INSIDE SKINNY

What your *SFX* chums are thinking about...

RICHARD EDWARDS EDITOR

RAVES

Still making my mind up about *Interstellar*, but impressed Nolan was given \$200 million to make a film with general relativity as a big bad. Thank you Rosetta/Phlae for turning landing a probe on a comet from sci-fi to sci-fact.

RIP

Glen A. Larson, who worked on many of the most iconic TV shows ever. What a legacy.



NICK SETCHFIELD FEATURES EDITOR

RAVES

Two very different takes on *Batman* have been stealing my time: the Blu-ray set of the '60s show is a beautiful beast but I've also been enjoying *Gotham* and its deliciously black heart. Fact: you can't have too much *Batman* in your life.

In awe of the Bessie the Hellcow reference on *Agents of SHIELD*. That's some deep core Marvel drilling.



ALEX COX OPERATIONS EDITOR

RAVES

Delightfully silly browser based RPG *Kingdom Of Loathing* has dragged me back in, and I'm only a little bit cross with it.

The new Mitch Murder album, "Interceptor", makes me feel like I'm '80s Tom Hanks doing mundane establishing things - typing, walking, eating a bagel, wearing a trenchcoat - beneath the opening credits of my life. Magical.



IAN BERRIMAN HOME ENTERTAINMENT EDITOR

RAVES

I have high hopes for Amazon's adaptation of Philip K. Dick's *The Man In The High Castle*.

Really looking forward to John Carpenter's new LP "Lost Themes", and *Finders Keepers* vinyl release of the *Holy Mountain* soundtrack.

Impressed by these Penguin-style *Who* postcards: <http://bit.ly/WhoCards>



JORDAN FARLEY COMMUNITY EDITOR

RAVES

I quite like *The Force Awakens*, mainly because it's no longer called *Star Wars: Episode VII*. That unnecessary colon...

Majora's Mask remaster coming to 3DS! As if 2015 wasn't exciting enough.

RANTS

Loved almost every ep of *Doctor Who* series eight, but bilimey "Death In Heaven" was pants.



DAVE BRADLEY GROUP ED-IN-CHIEF

RAVES

Other *SFX*ers may have mixed feelings, but I thought *Interstellar* was magnificent - big emotion, old-school sensawunda, plus innovative robots.

Loving Stephen Gregory's Poe-themed *Wakening The Crow*.

We've launched a new web venture at *GamesRadar.com*, and you can still hang out with *SFX* online at Twitter and Facebook.



JON COATES ART EDITOR

RAVES

My top three episodes of *Doctor Who* series eight, in order of bestness: "Flatline", "Listen", "Mummy On The Orient Express". Wasn't massively keen on "Dark Water" and "Death In Heaven" I'm afraid, although Michelle Gomez was great!

Always happy to watch anything presented by Dominic Sandbrook, so I'm really enjoying *Tomorrow's Worlds* on BBC Two.



ADRIAN HILL AD MANAGER

RAVES

It's been some year for SF and fantasy at the flicks, and next year we're going to be spoilt rotten. *Mad Max*, *Jurassic World*, *Ant-Man*, a good bit of *Bond*, and, of course the small matter of the return of *Star Wars*! Before all that though we have the Doctor's return on Christmas Day, and judging by our cover feature "Last Christmas" looks like it'll be rather fun.



NINA CROMMEYER DIEKE

FREELANCE WRITER

RAVES

Dying to see trailers for *The Force Awakens* and *Terminator: Genisys*!

RANTS

The Big Bang Theory's depiction of women is still ghastly. Penny, aka the hot one, is unrealistically dumb, others sneer at SF. It upholds the genre as a boys' club and stereotypes attractive girls as bored by anything scientific.



JAMIE GRAHAM EDITOR-AT-LARGE, FILM GROUP

RAVES

Bowled over by the energy and crazed violence of *Kingsman: The Secret Service*. It's like *Bond* gone bonkers!

Returned to Chuck Russell's *The Blob* (1988) for first time in years. The FX are so goo-d.

RANTS

Audience talking and munching popcorn during 'silent' moments of *Interstellar*. Gr.



BONNIE BURTON COLUMNIST

RAVES

I love how *Arrow* and *The Flash* give superheroes humanity. The believability of the characters makes me cheer for them every time.

So excited that Michelle MacLaren will take the helm of the new *Wonder Woman* movie!

RANTS

Disappointed that *Constantine* never had a chance to grow its audience over time.



MATT MAYTUM NEWS EDITOR, LONDON

RAVES

In the absence of a trailer at press time, the *Jurassic World* viral site - ostensibly the home of Masrani Global, the new owner of InGen and the company behind "the world's greatest theme park" - is great.

RANTS

Give Christopher Nolan a break: I'm leading the backlash against the *Interstellar* backlash.



It's amazing how quickly *Doctor Who* has become a Christmas institution. Until Russell T Davies brought him back in 2005 (how can it be nearly ten years ago?), the Time Lord hadn't been anywhere near tinsel, holly and mince pies since 1965's

"The Feast Of Steven". Now he's a fixture of the 25 December schedules, as integral to Christmas Day TV as the Queen's speech, *Morecambe And Wise* and abject misery on Albert Square - and the thing the *SFX* team look forward to as much as unwrapping their presents.

So how will the Twelfth Doctor, that most unfestive of Time Lords, get on with the season to be jolly? To find out we paid a visit to the North Pole (okay, Cardiff) where we had an audience with Santa Claus (okay, Nick Frost). We've also had a natter with showrunner Steven Moffat and the Doctor himself, Peter Capaldi. You can find out what they had to say on page 48.

Of course, if you're still struggling for present ideas and worried that Santa will be too busy messing around in the TARDIS to come up with the goods, you could buy a loved one a subscription to *SFX* - hell, why not treat yourself. There are some amazing offers on page 34.

So a very merry Christmas and a very happy new year from the whole *SFX* team. We'll see you in 2015 to talk about our brand new hoverboards, and what promises to be the biggest year in sci-fi history. Something tells me a major Force is about to awaken. I can't wait.

Rich

Richard Edwards, Editor
@RichDEDwards

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RED ALERT

THE FUTURE FIRST

edited by Jordan Farley

EX_MACHINA

Rise Of The Robot

EXCLUSIVE
WRITER/DIRECTOR
INTERVIEW

Dredd's Alex Garland explores what makes us human in new Brit thriller



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Season 2 of Ronald D Moore's viral thriller goes under the microscope.



16 TAKING FLIGHT

The need-to-know on Michael Keaton's new(ish) super *Birdman*.



20 ART-OO DETOO

Writer Jason Aaron gives us the info on *Star Wars'* return to Marvel.

IN JUNE A COMPUTER

program simulating a 13-year-old Ukrainian boy named Eugene became the world's first AI to pass the Turing Test, convincing a panel of judges it was human more than 30% of the time during a series of five minute conversations. *Ex_Machina*, the new film from *28 Days Later* and *Sunshine* scribe Alex Garland, asks the next logical question: if a machine's mind is indistinguishable from the human brain, does it possess a consciousness?

"Typically in stories we approach AIs as threatening and it's about our fears, but I don't really have those fears," writer/director Garland tells Red Alert. "If a machine does have a consciousness it seems to me basically the same as us, and you have to give it the same rights and respects. If you were going to put a label on who the bad guy is in this film, I wouldn't put it on the AI."

Unlike Eugene, Ava (Alicia Vikander) is much more than a faceless chatbot. Her remarkable mind is housed in a state of ➔



1

SCI-FACT!
Garland was hired to write a *Halo* movie script in 2005. It was later rewritten by *Thrones*' DB Weiss.

That's the cleanest hearth we've ever seen.

THE IMITATION GAME

Exploring the world of *Ex_Machina*

EDEN PROJECT

1 Nathan's sterile home come research facility is located among stunning surroundings – a very deliberate choice according to Garland. "That was a conscious juxtaposition between this very controlled environment that is actually getting out of control and the fractal wildness of the world outside. I wanted it to be set where there weren't other people around so it had an Eden-like quality. She's called Ava for a reason!"

DANCE MACHINE

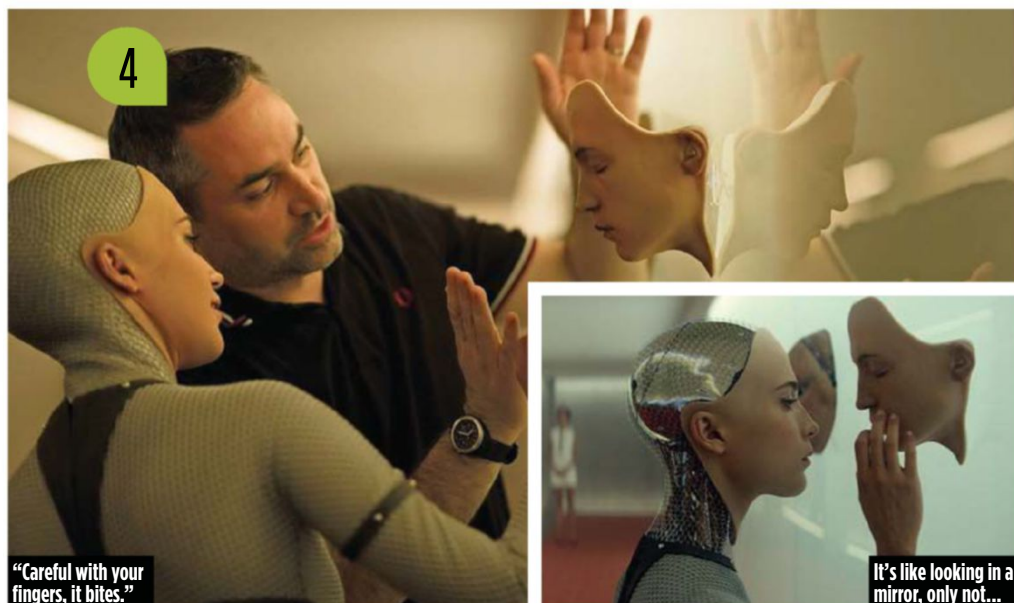
2 Extensive visual effects were used to bring Ava to life, but Vikander's performance was the crucial foundation says Garland. "She's a ballet dancer and has incredible control over her body, and that became an important part of the performance because you wanted her to be slightly inhuman, but not in way that telegraphed it too much. Not clunky robot movements, but something which was precise but very graceful."

LAND OF THE FREE

3 *Ex_Machina* is a British production, but there's a good reason it's set in the United States. "Because America is where these mega big tech companies are located," Garland explains. "Google, Apple, Microsoft, they're deeply American. There's this notional company called Blue Book in the film, but basically it's the world's biggest search engine, a tech company of a particular sort, and they're almost exclusively American."

CALLING THE SHOTS

4 *Ex_Machina* is Garland's first film as a director, but it wasn't the big deal you might think. "I know there's a big cult based around directing in the film industry but I don't buy into it at all. I only ever saw it as film-making. Every time I would work on a film it began with me trying to figure out what type of film to make and the best way to make that film, they're all beset by the same problems and hopes."



"Careful with your fingers, it bites."

It's like looking in a mirror, only not...

the art robotic body – a true impossible girl. "I saw the world as ten minutes in the future," Garland explains. "My basic idea was if somebody at Apple or Google announced that they had created Ava on some level we'd be surprised, but on another level we wouldn't be surprised at all. I grew up in the '70s and an iPhone is a pretty amazing thing in that respect. Obviously Ava would usher in a much more profound change than an iPhone, but people would be able to accept it. They wouldn't say: 'This is too strange for me to get my head around.'"

Ava is the brainchild of brilliant recluse Nathan (Oscar Isaac), a genius coder and creator of the world's most popular search engine, Blue Book. At the start of the film Nathan's talented but timid employee Caleb (Domhnall Gleeson) wins a trip to his boss' idyllic, high-tech home, but it's all a ruse. Caleb is really there to test Ava via a series of everyday conversations and Nathan is so confident in his creation that he doesn't even attempt to conceal Ava's mechanised body, putting her on full display behind a glass wall.

After collaborating on *Dredd*, Garland once again turned to British comic artist Jock to ensure Ava's look was unique. "It doesn't take much to attach a robot design to pre-existing robots," Garland says. "If you make a robot gold coloured they are basically C-3PO. White plastic makes you think of Chris Cunningham's 'All Is Full Of Love' Björk video, used quite a lot in *I, Robot*. So we had to go through a lot of designs to get here, because otherwise your first impression of her would be to think of a different movie."

Set almost entirely in Nathan's remote compound, the film is a three hander (four if you count Nathan's silent, subservient partner Kyoko) that lives or dies on its cast. Having worked together twice previously Gleeson was among the first to read Garland's final script.

"We had a really good relationship from two movies, *Dredd* and *Never Let Me Go*," Garland says. "The thing about Domhnall is he can

"Vulnerability can be irritating, but in Gleeson it's engaging"

project vulnerability in a way that doesn't push you away. Vulnerability in male actors can be irritating, but in him it's engaging. He's got a gentleness. A lot of actors tend to pull towards the alpha male, but he's much more complex than that, so I knew he was right for Caleb."

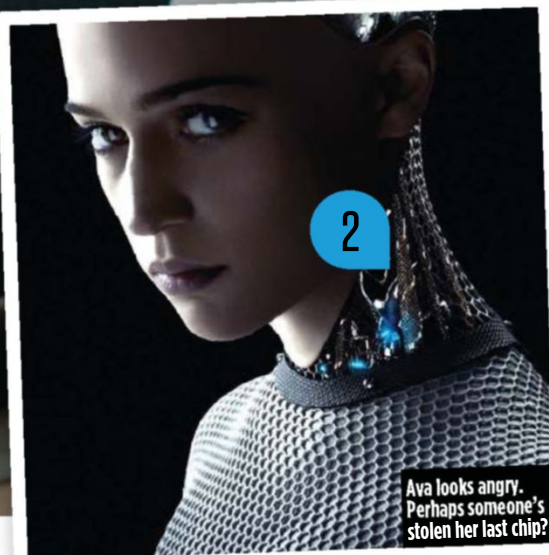
Despite a mind that would make Brian Cox look like a dunce, Caleb is soon out of his depth – stuck in the middle of a psychological battle between the world's smartest man, and the fiercely intelligent machine that has grown to despise her creator. If Ava is the film's brain and Caleb its soul, Nathan is *Ex Machina*'s twisted heart of darkness.

"When I used to think of Nathan I had various things in my mind but one of them was Kurtz in *Apocalypse Now*, where he's just spent too much time talking to machines," Garland explains. "There was also Oppenheimer, one of the key scientists behind the atomic bomb. It felt like there were parallels between the creation of a self aware AI and atomic bombs, which are played out quite explicitly in the film and discussed, actually."

Ex Machina also has an unexpected calling card – in Gleeson and Isaac it brought together two actors new to a galaxy far, far away before they were cast in *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*. Which begs the question – does Garland know something we don't?

"I'm not clairvoyant, honest! It was weird, it was really weird. But *Ex Machina*'s a tricky film in a lot of respects, so I was really pleased they got the parts because I thought that will make more people interested in our film than would have been otherwise!" **SFX**

Ex Machina is in cinemas from 23 January.



Ava looks angry. Perhaps someone's stolen her last chip?



Caleb suddenly remembered that he'd forgotten his PE kit.



GALAVANT

Ever After

Welcome in the new year with a fairytale musical from the makers of *Tangled*

IF YOU'VE EVER THOUGHT

The Princess Bride would make a great TV show don't miss *Galavant* – a high concept series cut from the same quirky cloth. Created by writer Dan Fogelman (*Tangled*) with composer Alan Menken (*Little Shop Of Horrors*) and lyricist Glenn Slater (*Tangled*), *Galavant* charts the exploits of the eponymous, down-on-his-luck hero (Joshua Sasse) through song, splendour and a whole lot of cheek.

In an exclusive chat with Red Alert, Fogelman admits that he's nervous to see what audiences make of the eight-episode first season. "I'm excited and interested to see what the response is going to be because this is very different. It's probably the most different thing that's been attempted in a network half-hour space in a long time.

"But with that being said," Fogelman continues, "It's very strong. Alan has written 30 songs and it's all set in a fairytale landscape. There's a lot of fairytale in it, a lot of the Disney/Pixar movies, and elements of *The Princess Bride* and Monty Python. It's mixing a lot of genres but it feels like its own thing and doesn't feel as crazy when you watch it. When you see it, you go, 'Wow this is great and so different,' but you don't go, 'This is bat-shit crazy!'" he laughs.

Shot on location in the UK, *Galavant* looks like a traditional fairytale, but is driven by something a little different. "I did *Tangled* and two musical episodes of *The Neighbors*, but I'm not a musical theatre junkie whatsoever," Fogelman confesses. "I've probably seen two musicals in my life so we leaned heavily on Alan and Glen which is what I think makes [the show] unique."

Fogelman adds that the cast also manages to ground their performances in reality which makes the potentially conflicting genres work. "I'm a *Game Of Thrones* addict and so you watch them and realise when you are trying to create something you have to own it," he explains. "You have to live inside this place

"It's probably the most different network half-hour in a long time"

in your head where you have a vision of the world and as long as the rules are followed and you take everything seriously then you're good."

Asked how much magic will define *Galavant*'s world, Fogelman says, "We don't have a ton of magic just yet, although it's something we're talking about introducing more if we make a second season. We are talking about adding bits and pieces as we continue but we are trying to let people fall into the show a little bit before we take all of the restraints off."

But that doesn't mean Fogelman hasn't attracted a lot of familiar genre faces. The likes of Anthony Head (*Buffy*), Timothy Omundson (*Xena*) and even the legendary Rutger Hauer (*Ladyhawke*) have been brought in to populate the series.

"With Rutger, we actually shot an homage to *Blade Runner* which we probably won't put into the show but it's *really* crazy," Fogelman teases. "Rutger was awesome as a total bad guy. He's such an eccentric, odd guy and it works really well on the show. He has a big part where he comes into the last three episodes to end our season. We also have Weird Al Yankovic who plays a monk in a cappella group of monks and it's very funny. Tony Head was awesome and plays *Galavant*'s father in a flashback and has a big song and that was incredible. We also have Hugh Bonneville and John Stamos all squished into eight episodes."

Galavant airs on ABC in the US from Sunday 4 January. A UK channel has yet to be announced.



Joshua Sasse allows the sun to witness the side of his magnificent face.

DATAFLOW

BRIEF ENCOUNTERS



GLEN A. LARSON

1937-2014

Colossally influential TV producer, screenwriter and shaper of many a childhood. Glen A. Larson has died at the age of 77. Fondly remembered in sci-fi circles for creating the original *Battlestar Galactica*, *Knight Rider* and the 1979 adaptation of *Buck Rogers In The 25th Century*, Larson also made *The Highwayman*, *Manimal* and *Automan* – less successful at the time, but shows which have developed a cult following in the years since. His final series, *Night Man* (based on the Malibu Comics character) debuted in 1997 and lasted just two seasons. Despite his prolific career, awards were thin on the ground, with just one Emmy nomination (for *Quincy*) and a Grammy nomination for *Battlestar Galactica*'s original score. Since 2009 he'd been in talks with Universal and Bryan Singer to bring *Battlestar Galactica* to the big screen. After further reading? We interviewed Larson for a full, frank and insightful look back at his career in *SFX* 230. He will be missed.

"Mirror, mirror, on the wall. What the heck is this girl doing to my hair?"

Good luck mate: she's been to the Marion Ravenwood school of hard drinking.

Treguard and Richard O'Brien debate whose '80s gameshow was best.

"Whenever I'm in the UK I sneak into meetings with [the production team]. They say, 'Can you do another one?' and I say, 'Yes! But not yet!'"

Neil Gaiman's up for writing more *Doctor Who*, but not yet...

DON'T QUOTE ME

SCI-FACT!
Guardians isn't James Gunn's first superhero movie. He also wrote *The Specials* and *Super*.

MY SCI-FI

James Gunn

The *Guardians Of The Galaxy* director reveals his sci-fi loves



FAVOURITE SF/FANTASY FILM

Back to the Future, for sure. The original *Star Wars* trilogy for sure. There's a lot of stuff that's in my head... *Forbidden Planet*, *Planet of the Apes*; *2001* is one of my favourite movies; *Flash Gordon*'s a big movie to me. I saw it again the other night for the first time in a long time and that was a huge influence. Wong Kar-Wai's *2046*, if you consider that a science-fiction film, may be my favourite.

FAVOURITE SF/FANTASY TV

Definitely probably *Farscape*, that was something I really liked a lot. I liked *Battlestar Galactica*. I've always had a thing for space. Especially space epics and space operas. I do like hard science fiction too, but I especially like the idea of space adventure.

FAVOURITE SF/FANTASY COMIC

My all-time favorite comics would be Alan Moore's. Alan Moore to me is a god. He's the all-time most influential writer to me, probably in the world... *Watchmen* for sure, but also *Promethea*, *Top 10*, *The League Of Extraordinary Gentlemen*, *Supreme*. The guy's a genius. He's a genius.

FAVOURITE SF/FANTASY HERO

Well, Harrison Ford, man! Han Solo. Definitely. He was the coolest guy ever. Oh, and Charlton Heston in *Planet Of The Apes*!

Guardians Of The Galaxy is available on DVD and Blu-ray now.

HELIX

SCI-FACT!
Ron D Moore wrote the first *Trek* episode featuring the Klingon homeworld, "Sins Of The Father".

Jungle Fever

The bio-chiller's second year heats things up for the CDC

THOUGH *HELIX* EXECUTIVE producer Ronald D Moore is worried about spoiling his show's second season – since, in Moore's words, the show is "so predicated on surprise" – after some cajoling he manages to summarize year two for Red Alert in three words: "Darker, unusual, twisted."

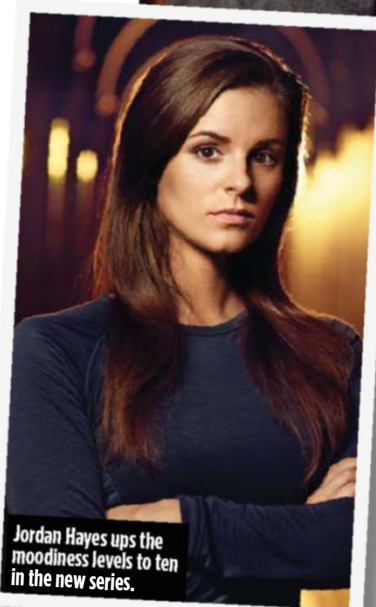
"We'll up the ante in a lot of ways, in the scares and the horror," he says. "But we're still trying to ride that line, so it's not a flat-out horror show. Because it's based in enough real things that are scary enough. The monkey was great, the rats. We had a lot of interesting visual things that we did last season. We'll be doing more of that."

The most obvious way in which Moore and *Helix*'s showrunner Steven Maeda are keeping things fresh is by departing from the arctic base that housed the show's CDC scientists in their first year, for a remote jungle island where a new threat awaits. The rate at which the show's story is told, however, will remain the same.

"The format of every episode is [still] one day. We think that's a great signature for the piece," Moore tells us. "And the claustrophobia of it, and still basing it in pathogens and viruses and what can happen when man plays God, and all these underlying themes. That will always be part of the show. But then you want every season to look very different. Not only in the physical location but also in the colour palette



Could this be the worst Ringwraith cosplay outfit ever?



Jordan Hayes ups the moodiness levels to ten in the new series.

and the visual style and what the characters are going through."

As for which of the show's characters will return, Moore remarks, "We're gonna see a good chunk of them in the second season. Not everyone right away. And some characters will show up in unexpected ways right at the get go. Some people will be in the first episode. Some people will be [back] a little bit later on. To kind of keep you wondering, 'Well, is that person coming back?'"

Among *Helix*'s new faces will be Steven Weber as the leader of a cult living on the island, who's determined to create a utopia; and Matt Long – best known to genre fans as *Ghost Rider*'s young Johnny Blaze – as the newest doctor to join the CDC. But the show's most enigmatic characters will remain.

"The 'immortals' as we call them are not gone," teases Moore. "They're still part of the mythology of the show and they're still a key element of the ongoing story." **SFX**

Helix returns to Syfy US on Friday 16 January.

APES VS STAR TREK

Monkey Tribble

Kirk and co meet the Apes in bananas crossover

● EARLIER THIS YEAR, IDW PUBLISHING, KNOWN for its *Star Trek* comics, and Boom! Studios, which licenses *Planet Of The Apes*, announced that they would be working together on the five-issue *Star Trek/Planet Of The Apes: The Prime Directive* series, featuring the original 1960s incarnations of each franchise. Is the world ready for Apes vs Klingons, or how about Shatner vs Heston?

The enviable task of writing the plot fell to brothers Scott and David Tipton. "*Star Trek* had lots of different ways to deal with time travel and alternate universes," explains David on how the match-up occurs. "We've worked hard to make this crossover fit within the continuity of both franchises – it's not an imaginary or 'what if' story." Scott adds

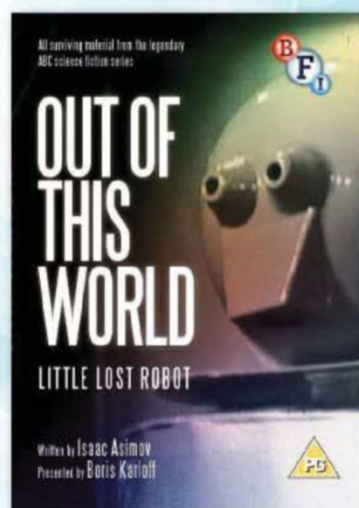
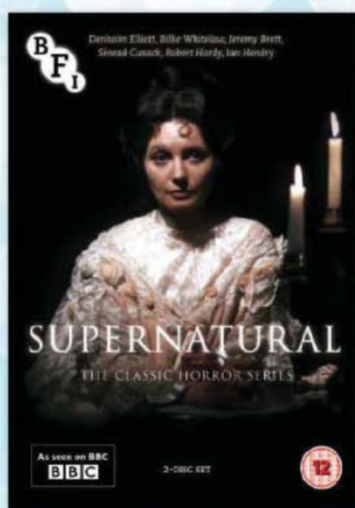
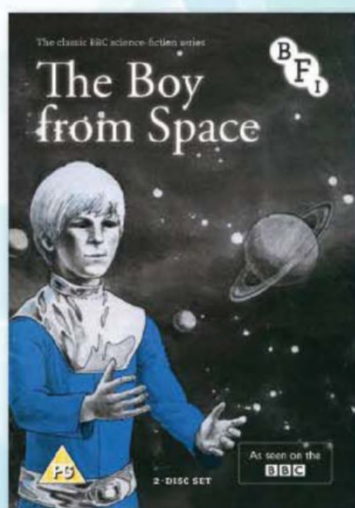
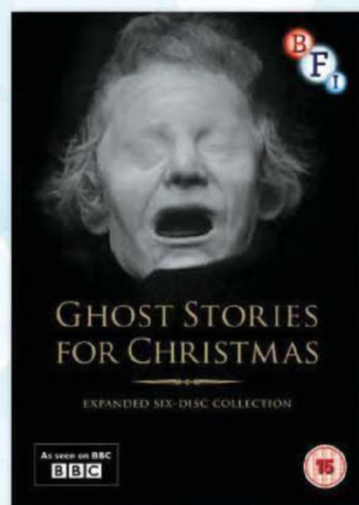
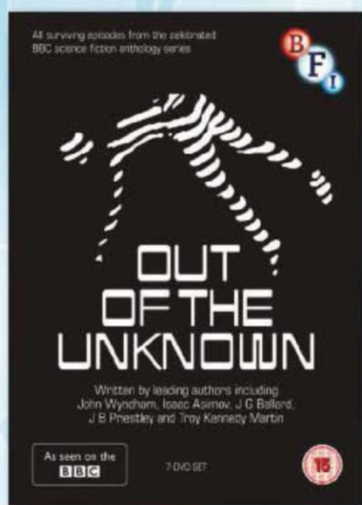
that the Klingons are central to the plot, and reveals when it is set. "It happens between the events of the first and second *Apes* movies," he says, "and the Charlton Heston Estate let us use his likeness, so it's him as Taylor in the same frame as William Shatner's Kirk, which takes it to another level."

For Scott and David, the entire process has been a thrill. "Both franchises have very different outlooks," David adds. "*Star Trek* is optimistic about the future, but *Planet Of The Apes* is darker and more pessimistic. *Trek* focuses on man's potential, but *Apes* is about its flaws. Put the two together, it's interesting to see it play out." **SFX**

Star Trek/Planet Of The Apes: The Primate Directive debuts later this month.



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BIRDMAN

"If you were a proper superhero, you'd wear your pants on the outside."

Wings Of Desire

FIVE THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT...
the surreal drama centred on an ex-superhero actor

MICHAEL KEATON IS STILL A BIT BATTY

1 In the rapturously-received black comedy *Birdman (The Unexpected Virtue Of Ignorance)* Michael Keaton plays Riggan Thomas, former star of three *Birdman* movies, who now craves critical acceptance by directing and starring in a Broadway play that he's written. If that doesn't sound very *SFX*, then the opening scene – with Riggan levitating in his dressing room – hints at weirder things to come. "It's about the constant struggle between what we are, and what we think we are, and how we can get lost in these fake ideas of ourselves," says co-writer Nicolás Giacobone. "And if you're forced to face that fake reality, it can be catastrophic."

IT'S A ONE-SHOT

2 The film is directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu, previously best known for hard-boiled dramas like

21 Grams, but it's not just the fact that he's decided to make a comedy that marks *Birdman* out as unusual. He's outdoing fellow Mexican Alfonso Cuarón's *Gravity*, with *Birdman* looking like it's been shot in one continuous take. "I worked with Alejandro on *Biutiful*, so I was surprised that he wanted to do a comedy," says Giacobone. "Also, to do it in one shot! Anybody who knows about comedy will say that's a recipe for disaster, because comedy is about rhythm, it's about reaction shots. You can't have those with a continuous take."

A QUESTION OF TIME

3 The "continuous shot" technique doesn't mean the film is in "real time". Far from it; it takes place over many weeks. This requires some clever transition shots, and was a headache for the writers. "It was frightening because we knew everything we left on the page would end up on screen. That put a lot of pressure on us. The transitions were very difficult to work out and Alejandro did an amazing job with them."

His use of time is fantastic – like an actor switching on a light that belongs in the next scene."

MANY COOKS MAKE TASTY BROTH

4 There are four writers credited for *Birdman* – as well as Iñárritu and Giacobone, Alexander Dinelaris Jr and Armando Bo also worked on the script. But this wasn't a case of "pass the draft". *Birdman* was a truly collaborative effort. "At the beginning our discussions were about form rather than content, usually over Skype," says Giacobone. "Then we began meeting, the four of us, in Mexico, Europe, and LA. Slowly we began to discover the story. You have to hide your ego in this weird place and allow yourself to say whatever comes into your mind – even if it's the worst or most stupid or most mediocre idea ever. It's difficult to describe precisely how the script happened. Everybody learned how to make this film while doing it."

BIRDMAN RETURNS

5 In the middle of all this, there's a huge superhero action scene, because Riggan finds it hard to bury his past. "I like when Riggan is on the other side of madness," says Giacobone. "Every scene with crazy Riggan I loved. And Michael Keaton did it brilliantly." **SFX**

Birdman takes flight on Friday 2 January 2015. Check out what we thought on page 98.

AFTERLIFE #98

Jamie Bamber

Lee Adama in *Battlestar Galactica*



BRITISH ACTOR JAMIE BAMBER has appeared in many acclaimed TV series in his career. However it was taking the mantle as Captain Apollo in the superb re-imagining of '70s sci-fi show *Battlestar Galactica* that remains his most cherished role. We caught up with the actor at Australia's Sydney Supanova Pop Culture Expo (www.supanova.com.au).

WOULD YOU LIKE TO PLAY THE ROLE AGAIN?

► Yes, if the scripts were right and if Ron Moore and all my colleagues were involved then yes, I'd be really excited to revisit it.

WHAT'S THE STRANGEST REQUEST YOU'VE HAD FROM A FAN?

► To sign an engagement cake with icing with the fiancée present as well!

WOULD ANY OF YOUR CHARACTER'S SKILLS OR ATTRIBUTES HAVE BEEN USEFUL IN REAL LIFE?

► I think he was pretty decisive under pressure. I think he was resourceful, principled. His nature was always to follow his conscience and not just to follow the rules. I think those are good qualities.

WHAT WOULD YOUR CHARACTER BE DOING NOW?

► I think today he would be at the vanguard of the environmentalist lobby trying to sort some of the global problems we have. If he had the knowledge of what he went through as a Caprican then he'd be like John the Baptist crying in the wilderness about the direction we were going in maybe.

IS THERE ANYTHING YOU THINK WAS UNFINISHED ABOUT THE CHARACTER'S STORY?

► No, I think that we explored almost every facet that you could explore in a young man's life... he did every job from barrister to fighter pilot to president to dissident to rebellious mercenary. He had a good run!

DID YOU GET ANY SOUVENIRS FROM THE SET?

► I have a Viper model that was a prop in Lee's apartment. I have my flight suit, dog tags, bits of paperwork and stuff.

ANYTHING FROM THE SHOW YOU WISH WAS REAL?

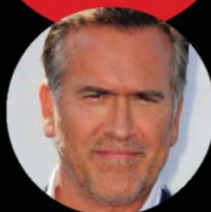
► Be careful what you wish for but some of those Cylons were mighty good looking!

WHAT WOULD IT SAY ON THE CHARACTER'S GRAVESTONE?

► Here lies Lee Adama. Sorry Dad!

AERIAL ASSAULT

SF TV ROUND UP



NEWBIES

► Sam Raimi and Bruce Campbell taking sequel show *ASH VS THE EVIL DEAD* to Starz.

► David Goyer rumoured to be developing *Man Of Steel* prequel show *KRYPTON*.

► *FROM HELL* being adapted as a TV show for FX.

► HBO orders star-studded *WESTWORLD* adaptation from Jonathan Nolan to series.

► Jonathan Nolan also working with HBO on an adaptation of Asimov's *FOUNDATION* books.

► *THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE* makes the leap to Amazon Instant Video. First ep to air in its 2015 pilot season.

► Jeremy Carver penning a reboot of Dennis Quaid thriller *FREQUENCY*.

► Netflix producing a new series based on *LEMONY SNICKET'S A SERIES OF UNFORTUNATE EVENTS*.

► Ridley Scott and Stuart Beattie adapting *3001: THE FINAL ODYSSEY* for Syfy.

► *LIMITLESS* sequel series in works at CBS. Bradley Cooper will produce.

► Fox commits to *LEAGUE OF PAN*, a "gritty murder mystery" spin on *Peter Pan*.

© REX (2)

ACCIDENT MAN

Calamity James

Pat Mills talks the return of *Accident Man*

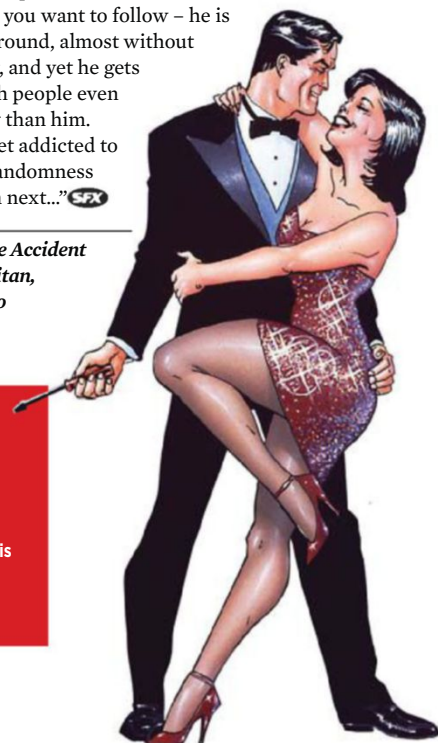
IT IS GREAT TO REVISIT THE character," begins the iconic comic book writer Pat Mills. "And I can safely say that he is in fantastic hands with Dark Horse Comics."

Birthing in the pages of *2000 AD* in the early 1990s, *Accident Man* was a revelation: a super-suave hitman who was effortlessly cool. Think James Bond for the Thatcher-era. So the character's resurgence as a 21st century lothario should be intriguing...

"There has been talk about an *Accident Man* film too," admits Mills, speaking to Red Alert at the Edinburgh Book Festival. "So now we wait and see if Hollywood studios will 'get' the character. But, right now, the new series is what has me interested. The art is being done by Fay Dalton. She really gets who *Accident Man* is, and she's done an amazing job. She draws these very sexy and powerful male and female characters. I don't know if a guy could get away with it, to be honest [laughs]."

Asked about *Accident Man*'s enduring appeal and Mills admits to being perplexed. "I don't know," he shrugs. "He is quite horrible to be honest. But there is something you want to follow – he is wandering around, almost without any meaning, and yet he gets involved with people even more ghastly than him. You sort of get addicted to where this randomness will take him next..." **SFX**

The Complete Accident Man, from Titan, is available to buy now.



DON'T QUOTE ME

"I hate you. I really don't like you... I cannot sanction your buffoonery"

According to Jim Carrey, Tommy Lee Jones wasn't his most welcoming co-star on *Batman Forever*.

SCI-FACT!

Relative unknown Benjamin Kanes plays the man in the suit in *Birdman*.



SCI-FACT!
The *Age Of Ultron* trailer was viewed 34 million times in 24 hours, breaking *Iron Man 3*'s record.

RELEASE DATE
24 APRIL 2015

FREEZE FRAME

THIS MONTH:
Earth's mightiest heroes assemble again to stop a malevolent AI in **Avengers: Age Of Ultron**



● The gang look exhausted and distressed aboard the Quinjet. Could this be after an uncontrollable Hulk out?



● Ultron makes his grand entrance, crashing an Avengers party. He didn't even bring crisps – jerk.



● Pietro and Wanda Maximoff (Quicksilver and Scarlet Witch) join Ultron after busting out of Baron Strucker's secret lab.



● Ultron turns Stark's peace-keeping robot army against the Avengers.



● Tony looks on his deadly creation. There are strong hints this could be the end of the line for the Avengers as we know them.



● The incredible Hulkbuster armour. This scene was shot in Johannesburg. Could it be doubling for Wakanda?



● Quicksilver saves Cap from one of Ultron's minions. It's a safe bet the speedster has joined the good guys by this stage.



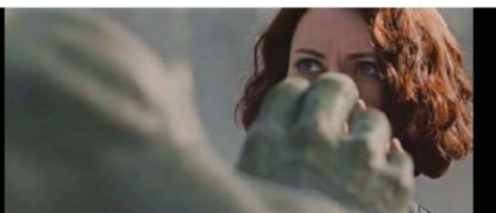
● A flashback, or forgotten memory, from WW2. Could Peggy Carter and Howard Stark appear here?



● Judging by the beard, Andy Serkis is playing Ulysses Klaw – a regular *Black Panther* villain who mines vibranium.



● What's Thor doing screaming shirtless in a rock pool? Perhaps he's returned to Asgard.



● Black Widow calms Hulk down with a touch. Natasha and Bruce are closer than ever in *Age Of Ultron*.



● Ultron's final form appears to be made out of vibranium, which would explain how he can crack Cap's shield.

THE BUZZ

JORDAN



Wow. That voice, that song, that Hulkbuster armour... and not a trademark Whedon wisecrack in sight. If you need me I'll be watching this trailer on a loop for the next five months.

NICK



Someone's spun the grim 'n' moody dial... Almost a Warner/DC tone for Marvel but this does look ace. Ultron was always compelling in the comics and he looks like he'll be a thrilling threat on screen.

TARA



It's disconcerting connecting James Spader's voice to a robot, but otherwise the chaos in the trailer looks delicious! Also, that's a nice creepy remix of "I've Got No Strings"...

RHIAN



Five months feels like far too long to wait! James Spader is as mesmerising as ever, and the Avengers themselves look suitably under pressure. It does look a little similar to the first film, though.

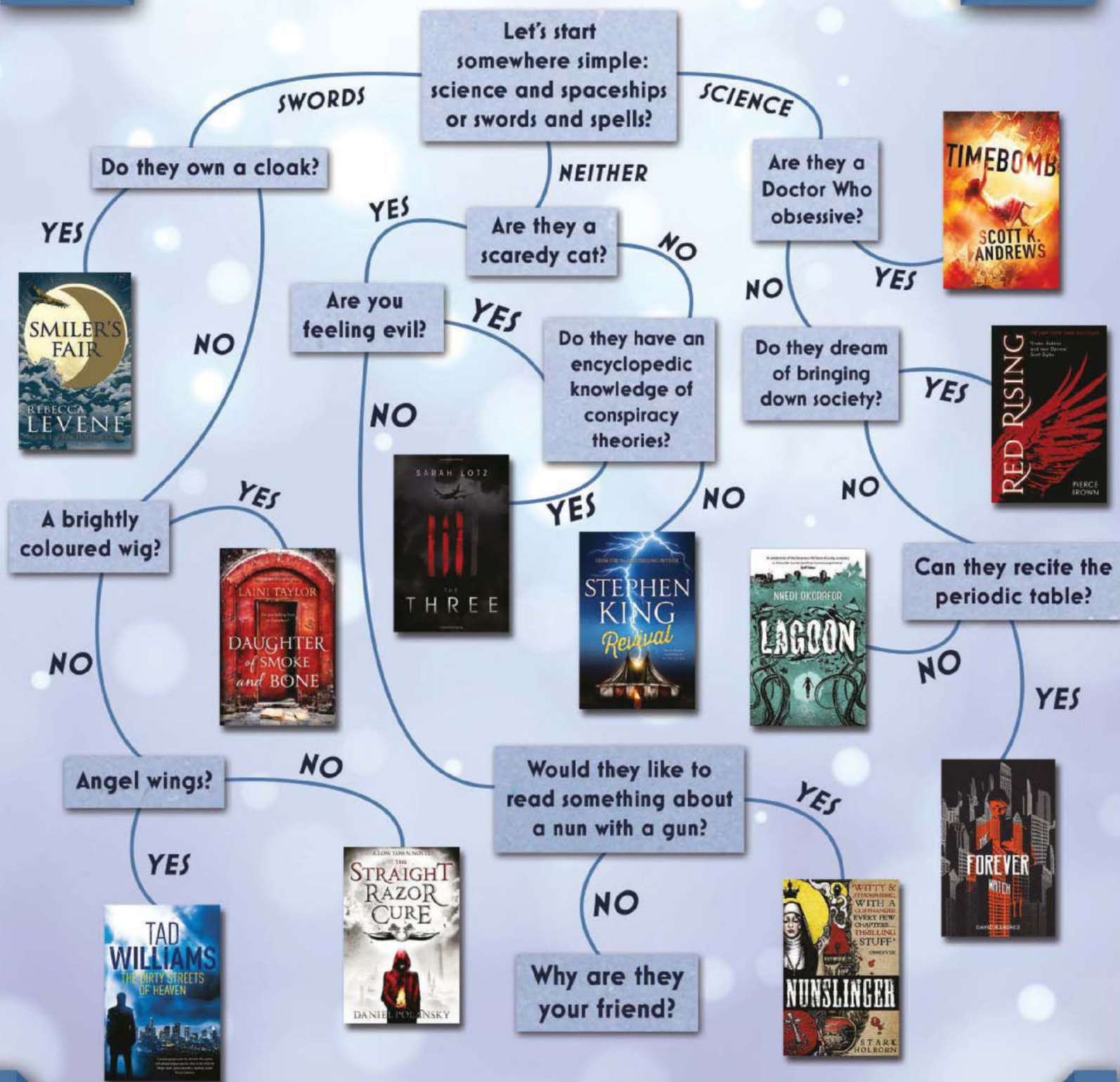
JOE



Besides winning the award for Creepiest Use of the *Pinocchio* Soundtrack Ever, it suggests a sequel so dark as to make *The Empire Strikes Back* look like *Grease 2*. Joss shows us how it's done.

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SCI-FACT!
Jason Aaron got his break in comics after winning a Marvel talent search contest.

DYING LIGHT

Night Terrors

Mirror's Edge meets *Dead Island*? Sold

● POLISH DEVELOPER TECHLAND HIT ON A winning formula with its best-selling *Dead Island* series – a first person zombie hack and slash set on an overrun tropical resort. After parting ways with publisher Deep Silver, the Techland team went back to the drawing board only to realise they had unfinished business with the undead.

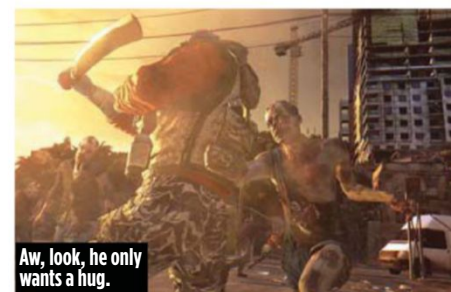
Parkour-influenced *Dying Light* takes place in the fictional city of Harram, a middle-eastern metropolis locked down after a zombie outbreak several months prior. You play Kyle Crane, an operative sent in to track down a cure. Harram's vertiginous architecture was designed to let players tackle zombie encounters in any number of ways.

"We wanted to create a game that gives players more options than just hacking and slashing," says Smektala. "We give players the tools to express themselves. They can run, climb on roofs to assess the situation or sneak around and reach their destination without engaging in combat."

When the sun sets, however, the tables are turned and the docile zombies Crane can run rings round during the day take on a deadly new form. "We almost have two games in one. During the day you have the advantage, but during the night the infected transform into intelligent, agile monsters." An asymmetric multiplayer mode where you get to play as *Dying Light*'s lethal Hunter and invade your mate's game rounds out the package.

"I think people don't just want the same game with better graphics," says Smektala. "They want something new. Only games that provide something fresh in terms of gameplay can achieve that, and I hope *Dying Light* will be that game." **SFX**

Dying Light is released on PS4, Xbox One and PC on 27 January.



A New Hope

As *Star Wars* returns to Marvel, Jason Aaron takes the franchise back to the beginning

ALMOST THIRTY YEARS after they published their last *Star Wars* comic, Marvel is heading back to a galaxy far, far away in 2015 with three new series – *Star Wars* by Jason Aaron and John Cassaday, *Darth Vader* by Kieron Gillen and Salvador Larroca, and the five-issue mini *Princess Leia* by Mark Waid and Terry Dodson. The chance to steer the flagship title was too exciting for Jason Aaron to resist. "I had to come off the *X-Men* book I was doing a little sooner than I wanted to and it threw what I thought I was going to be doing for the rest of this year all up into the air," he says. "But I don't regret that. This kind of job doesn't come around very often, so you've got to grab it."

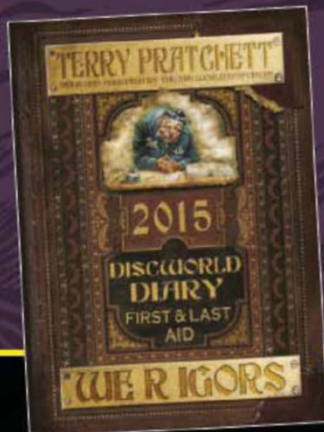
The new series picks up the story in the aftermath of the destruction of the first Death

Star. Aaron says, "[Marvel is] starting over with a brand new canon. I love the thought that basically it's 1978 and I was hired to write a sequel to that original film. The Rebel Alliance just scored this huge victory, so it's about the rebels doing everything they can to try to press their advantage. It opens with them staging an assault on another Imperial target and of course the mission doesn't go quite as planned."

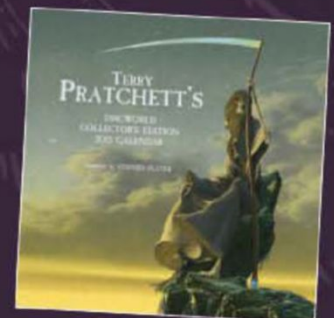
"There are some things you can't do," says Aaron about established storylines, "But you can get creative in terms of which characters cross paths and in what ways, so you'll definitely see combinations in these books that we haven't seen before. There are a lot of things we'll be doing to dance between those raindrops." **SFX**

Star Wars issue 1 is released on 14 January 2015.

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**“A sequence of
unalloyed delight”**
— *Guardian*



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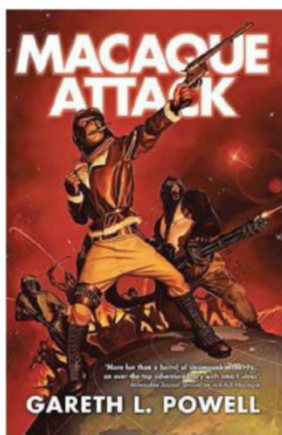
MACAQUE ATTACK

No More Monkey Business

Gareth L Powell on the *Ack-Ack Macaque* trilogy



Gareth L Powell, the man behind the macaque.



BRITISH NOVELIST GARETH L POWELL FIRST met Ack-Ack Macaque in 2006, when he was searching for “a fictional anime character” to appear in a short story. “I had the words ‘Ack-Ack’ and ‘Macaque’ jotted in one of my notebooks,” he recalls, “and they somehow gravitated towards each other.”

Thus Powell’s monkey pilot made his way into the world, and made his name in *Ack-Ack Macaque* (2013), the first volume in a now completed trilogy. The novel shared the BSFA Award with Ann Leckie’s *Ancillary Justice*, and Ack-Ack’s direct approach to problem-solving (“If somebody’s getting in his face, he’ll bite them”) was an instant hit with readers.

“Maybe he’s my dark side, the part of me that doesn’t give a rat’s arse for rules and social etiquette, the part that gets bored in meetings, or just wants to blow off work and sit in the bath with a box of doughnuts,” says Powell. “The nearest comparison I can find for him is John Belushi’s character, Wild Bill Kelso, in Spielberg’s *1941* – although Ack-Ack has more fire in his belly, and is much a better pilot.”

Macaque Attack, due to be published in January 2015, won’t just finish up the monkey’s story, but tie up loose ends from his 2011 space opera *The Recollection* too. “It takes the story to a whole other level,” he says. “At the start of the book, Ack-Ack finds himself at the head of a dimension-hopping monkey army – and things only get weirder.” **SFX**

The macaque attacks on Thursday 15 January 2015.

AERIAL ASSAULT SF TV ROUND UP



SHOWRUNNING

Ryan Murphy (above) confirms every season of **AMERICAN HORROR STORY** is connected. First person to guess the connection wins a KitKat.

Father of **IRON MAN 2** villain Whiplash to appear in **AGENT CARTER**.

Harley Quinn and the Flying Graysons to feature in future episodes of **GOTHAM**.

WITCHES OF EAST END cancelled by Lifetime.

CASTING CALL

Philip Glenister and Patrick Fugit to star in Robert Kirkman’s exorcism drama **OUTCAST**.

Charles Dance to play Karelle in Syfy’s **CHILDHOOD’S END**.

Victoria Smurfit and Merrin Dungey join the **ONCE UPON A TIME** cast as Cruella de Vil and *The Little Mermaid*’s Ursula respectively.

Keith David has enlisted at Greendale **COMMUNITY** college.

Bridget Regan and Lyndsy Fonseca join the MCU in **AGENT CARTER**.

True Blood’s Jim Parrack returns from the dead for **RESURRECTION**’s second season.

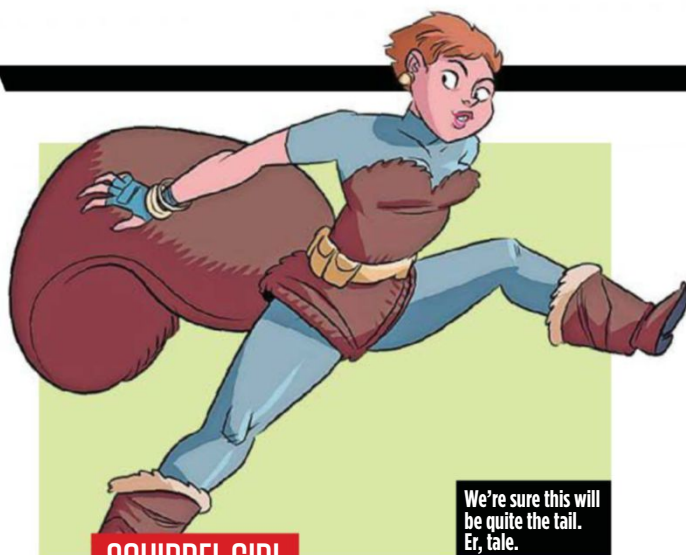
DON'T QUOTE ME

“I watched it once, at the premiere, so I’m not in a good position to judge”

When it comes to *Star Wars Episode I: The Phantom Menace*, Ewan McGregor is nothing if not diplomatic.

SCI-FACT!

Squirrel Girl was created by writer Will Murray and legendary comic artist Steve Ditko.



SQUIRREL GIRL

We’re sure this will be quite the tail. Er, tale.

Going Nuts

Squirrel Girl readies her own series for winter

MARVEL’S UNLIKELIEST HEROINE is headlining her own comic in January. “My editor, Wil Moss, emailed me saying, basically, ‘Hey, if you were to write a Squirrel Girl comic, what would it look like?’” says writer Ryan North. “The more I thought about it the more I thought, ‘Oh gosh, I really want to write this comic.’ I sent them my pitch, they wrote back saying, ‘How did you know this was exactly what we were looking for?’ which was very kind of them, and here we are! I’ve never done this

before, but I wrote a theme song for her and put it in the pitch. Luckily they liked the song too!”

North snagged an Eisner Award in 2013 for his *Adventure Time* comic adaptation and he hopes *The Unbeatable Squirrel Girl* will have the same wide appeal. “All ages means just that,” he says.

“Like with *Adventure Time*, I wanted the book to be good for everyone, and my idea of that is just ‘no swearing and everybody keeps their pants on!’”

What he doesn’t want to do is just ape the style of established comedy hit series *Deadpool*. “One of the differences between them is that *Deadpool* knows he’s a funny guy in a comic book. He’s in on the joke,” says North. “Squirrel Girl doesn’t know she’s in a comic. The threats are real to her.”

The opening arc sees the arboreal heroine heading to college. “But pretty soon she’s facing down villains with world-changing consequences,” says Ryan. “I don’t want to give away any names, but one of them starts with

‘G’ and rhymes with ‘Alactus.’” **SFX**

Squirrel Girl flies into action in from January.

© REX (1)



STAR TURN

Rebecca Romijn

Blue-skinned mutant turns thick-skinned soldier for *The Librarians*

ORIGIN STORY

▶ "I was sent the script and immediately responded to the genre because I grew up a huge Indiana Jones fan and I'd never done exactly this type of action adventure show before. I said yes before I even saw the *Librarian* movies, and then I saw the movies and realised the tone was so much funnier than I thought it was going to be."

ALL ABOUT EVE

▶ "Colonel Eve Baird is a counter terrorism expert. She's an investigator and she's sort of the straight man of the group, the sceptic, the voice of the audience who doesn't believe in magic. But as soon as she's convinced that there is magic in the world and that humanity is under threat she realises her job there is much more important than she thought."

JUST SAY NOAH

▶ "This is Noah Wyle's baby. He's our executive producer, he oversees everything and he's a recurring character. We're constantly talking about him and he does appear in roughly half of our episodes. It's really the same as the movies. It's a fun, fantasy action adventure show. There's nothing dark or bleak. We're not superheroes. Families can watch it together."

GOING BY THE BOOK

▶ "One of my favourites is the fairytale episode where we go to this town and fairytale characters are coming to life and killing people. We slowly start turning into fairytale characters too, which is mortifying, especially for Eve who starts turning into a princess! Most of our episodes standalone, but there is a throughline and a great payoff in the finale."

ADDED MYSTIQUE

▶ "Jennifer Lawrence and I got to talk a lot about the make-up process on *First Class*, which is very different for her now. It's an honour to share the role with her. She's a really cool girl, so talented and so beautiful. I don't miss having to go through the make up process, but it was a really special group to be a part of. It was a special time."

The Librarians airs Mondays on Syfy.



SCI-FACT!
The MCU is currently the second highest grossing film franchise of all time.

SPOTLIGHT

SPOILER WARNING!

We look at the comics and speculate wildly on Phase Three of Marvel's movie masterplan

WHAT'S THIS CIVIL WAR ABOUT?

► If Phase One was all about getting the band together, it looks like the end of Phase Two will see our heroes suffer a violent case of musical differences. The fall out from Ultron's disassemblage will probably land mostly on the conscience of Tony Stark: it's his "security measure" that sets about trying to murder humanity. We reckon this civic guilt brings Iron Man nose-to-nose with freedom fan Steve Rogers in *Captain America: Civil War*, an epic Earth-splitting battle that could leave Cap out of commission.

WHERE'S THE BIG GREEN SMASHER WHILE ALL THIS IS GOING ON?

► Also expect Bruce Banner to be shuffled off the main stage. Given the necessity of

Hulkbuster armour in *Age Of Ultron*, we think that the Avengers' smashing weapon gets himself labelled a liability by the government forces waging a Civil War. Could The Hulk find himself exiled into outer space courtesy of his best bud Tony Stark?

HOW MANY INFINITY STONES ARE LEFT AGAIN?

► There's a good chance that Phase Three will not only set up a new generation of Avengers, but also put the finishing touches on the Infinity Gauntlet. We're four stones down, with two to go: the time and the soul gems. The latter could turn up during *Doctor Strange* – which may also introduce the idea of parallel universes to Marvel's cinematic audiences.

Guardians Of The Galaxy 2 would seem like the logical place to introduce the time stone – some of the cosmos crew's best-known stories have involved a spot of flux capacitor action – and also lets fan-favourite (and perennial Thanos botherer) Adam Warlock out of his cocoon, as teased in the first movie.

THOR: RAGNAROK? ISN'T THAT A NIGHTCLUB...

► We suspect Phase Three's dramatic tipping point will take place on Asgard. *Thor: Ragnarok* could see the God Of Thunder battle the colossal fire giant Surtur at the Nine Realms' "end of days" – a Norse apocalypse spurred on by Loki's attempt to wiggle out of his debt to Thanos, who could be fishing a certain golden glove out of the ashes of Asgard.

The comic version of this story had Thor go to blond god heaven, which would see him out for the first sortie of *Infinity War*, the two-part *Avengers* team-up. This sets us up for an *Empire Strikes Back*-bummer of a cliffhanger for *Part I* as Thanos and his superpowered bling prove too much for Avengers Mark II – including Doctor Strange and other newcomers Black Panther and Ant-Man – leaving the gang requiring some serious back up...

HOW DOES CAPTAIN MARVEL FIT IN?

► The interesting thing about the *Avengers: Infinity War* split is the movies that are sandwiched by it: *Captain Marvel* and *Inhumans*. While we'd imagine the latter will

Steve Rogers will batter Tony Stark in 2016, mark our words. Kapow!



have one eye on becoming a key part of the Marvel Phase Four (and the other eye on *X-Men*), we reckon Major Carol Danvers' mega-powers are now likely to stem from the Infinity Gauntlet, adding a much needed superstring to the Avengers' bow.

WILL WE EVER SEE THE ORIGINAL AVENGERS TOGETHER AGAIN?

► We'd be surprised if the whole gang wasn't back for *Infinity War Part II*: a last hurrah of the big stars' multi-movie contracts. Thor, Cap and Hulk will return from the grave, the jail cell or outer space (maybe with a little help from certain galaxy-based Guardians), while Tony Stark – effectively a baddie in *Civil War* – will find his redemption. Hawkeye will also be in there too. Probably.

WHEN DOES IT BEGIN?

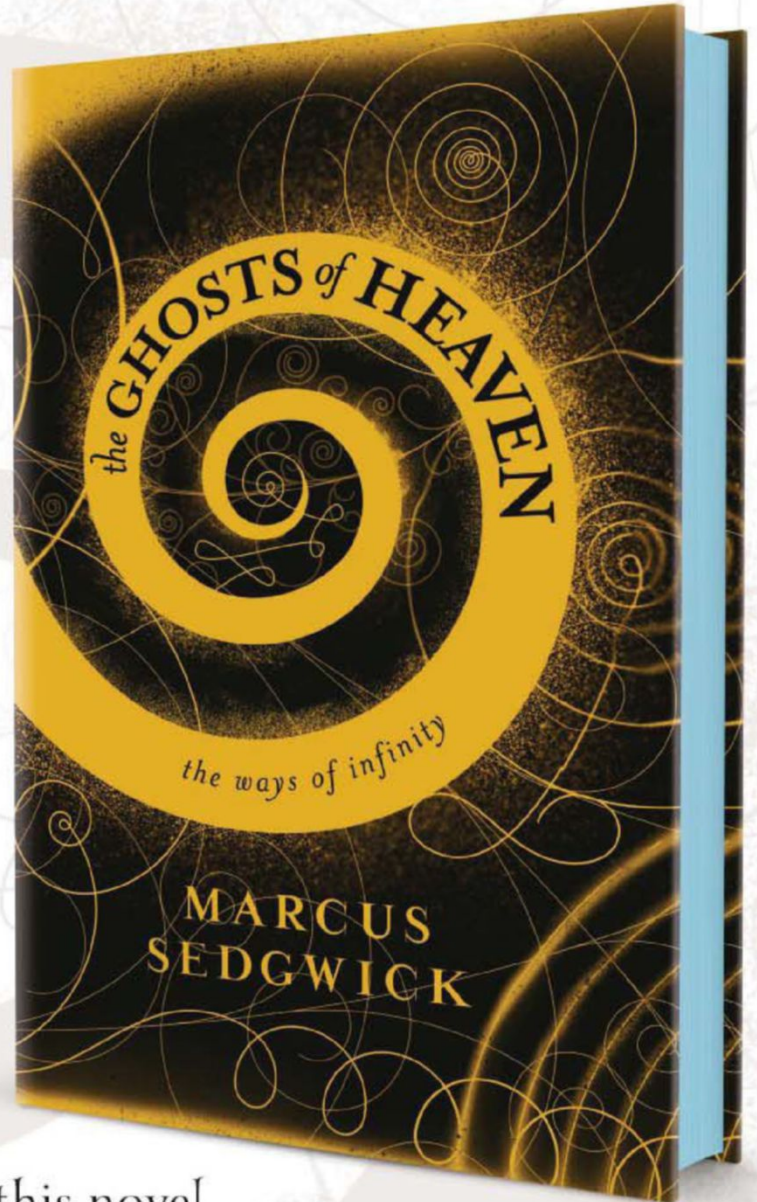
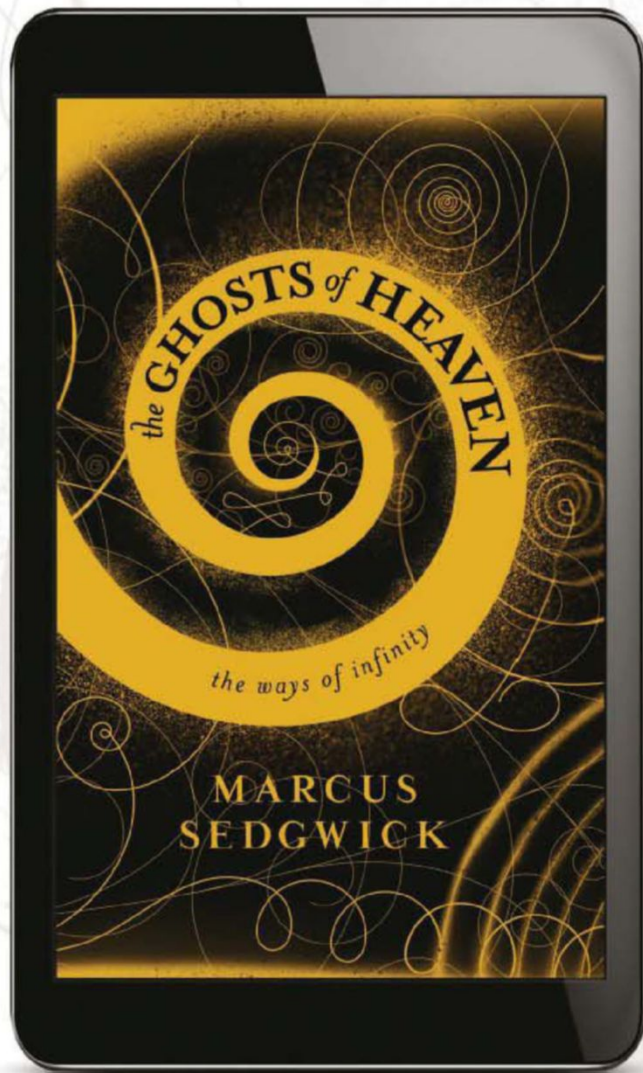
► Phase Three officially kicks off with *Captain America: Civil War* on 29 April 2016, and concludes with *Avengers: Infinity War Part 2*, due out on 3 May 2019. **SFX**



Thanos seems pleased, but we think he should adopt a more modest pose.

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CARDBOARD-D2

1 If you judged this book by its cover, the last thing you'd expect to emerge from its (admittedly chunky) pages is a 29cm tall cardboard R2-D2, but that's what you get after a tiny bit of card craft. It's recommended for ages 7+, but is dead easy to construct with just a dozen press out pieces to slot together, and absolutely no glue required. There's also a 24-page story and puzzle book included - useful for distracting the young 'un in your life while you create the squeaky astromech droid. *R2-D2's Droid Workshop* is available in bookshops across the galaxy now.



IMAGE BANK

Treat your peepers to some cool sci-fi pics



MERRY WHO-MAS

2 Everyone knows the best thing about Christmas is the *Doctor Who* Christmas special (well, everyone except ol' Humbug Ian, who tells us why on page 38), so what better gift to bestow upon a Time Lord obsessed loved one this festive season than some classy *Doctor Who* art? This pair of *Who*-inspired Christmas cards by Sean Coleman have been created in the style of Penguin's '70s sci-fi book covers. They're available to buy now in packs of ten (with five of each) or individually at <http://bit.ly/WhoXmasCards>.



LEFT WING CASTING

3 In some unspeakable alternate dimension, *Doctor Who* has a very unusual and, er, *laboured* history: Harold Wilson played the First Doctor, Gordon Brown the Fourth, Tony Blair the Fifth, Neil Kinnock the Ninth and Ed Miliband the Eleventh. Fortunately, that is not the case in our world, where the casting gods have been much kinder. This striking and slightly disturbing *New Statesman* cover - note the looming Tory-blue Dalek - is from its 7 November issue, with artwork by David Young. We heartily recommend picking up a copy for more (occasionally geeky) current affairs analysis.



AGENTS OF SHIELD

Shield-Bearers

Coulson and company cross into comics



● AFTER MINING DECADES OF CONTINUITY ON the big screen and in the *Agents Of SHIELD* TV series, Marvel is now embarking upon that process in reverse with the launch of the abbreviated *SHIELD* later this month, in which many of Agent Coulson's team will make their comic debut. However, with the comics version of the covert espionage organisation much stronger than it is on the big and small screen, writer Mark Waid promises a different playing field.

"We're absolutely taking our character cues from the TV show but there are some necessary differences," he tells *Red Alert*. "In the comics, *SHIELD* isn't the same bare-bones outfit as it is on the show, but we're trying as best we can to match the overall tone."

According to Waid, his interpretation of stalwarts such as Fitz, Simmons and Melinda May varies subtly from their TV equivalents. "That's only because our lead time is so much longer than theirs is, so we can't match every beat of things like the soap opera relationship between Fitz and Simmons," he explains. "If we tried to match it as it stands right now as I give you this answer, by the time we saw print, their TV status quo will have changed."

Drawn by artists such as Carlos Pacheco, Alan Davis and Humberto Ramos, each issue will be self-contained, allowing Waid to pull in some intriguing cameos. "The book is firmly ensconced in the Marvel Universe, so there'll be superhero guest stars galore," he says. "The Marvel edict was to treat this as if the TV show had an unlimited budget, so you'll be seeing everyone from Spider-Man to Invisible Woman, Scarlet Witch and Rocket Raccoon, just in the first few issues!"

SHIELD leaps into action from 31 December.

NEWS WARP
ALL FACT, NO FILLER

► Christopher Nolan pens **INTERSTELLAR** prequel comic about Dr Mann for *Wired*. Read it online now: <http://bit.ly/InterstellarComic>

► **DOCTOR WHO** series eight pulls in an average of 7.4 million viewers every week in the UK. Woo Who!

► **THE HUNGER GAMES** heading to the stage as a theatrical show at a new, purpose built theatre next to Wembley in 2016.

► Nick Spencer's new **ANT-MAN** comic series to feature unique shrinking variant covers, each with a different sized Ant-Man. Also, a movie spin-off novel, *Natural Enemy*, announced for 2015.

► Acclaimed artist **DAVE GIBBONS** named the UK's first comics laureate.

► **HBO** launching a Netflix-style standalone streaming service in 2015.

► *Maniac Mansion* creators Ron Gilbert and Gary Winnick Kickstarting old school point and click adventure game **THIMBLEWEED PARK**.

► **THINK GEEK** selling Wil Wheaton-approved Wesley Crusher hoodie, a perfect present... for someone you, er, love?

► Hulk Hogan teaming up with Scooby-Doo for a 2016 animated movie, a sequel to **SCOOBY-DOO! WRESTLEMANIA**.

© REX (1)

"I was like, 'This is torture, man. I don't want to do this.' My agent said: 'You have to; it's part of the deal'"

According to Idris Elba filming Marvel movies isn't all it's cracked up to be.

DON'T QUOTE ME

SCI-FACT!

"Episode VII" may no longer feature in the title of *The Force Awakens*, but it will be in the opening crawl.

STAR WATCH



The Force has awakened

NO LONGER SHALL NEXT year's *Star Wars* instalment be referred to as plain old *Episode VII*. On Thursday 6 November, the @starwars Twitter feed revealed a hashtag that will be long remembered – #TheForceAwakens. Okay, it feels a little bit like it's emerged from a random *Star Wars* title generator, but we reckon *The Force Awakens* is a better name than both *The Phantom Menace* and *Attack Of The Clones*. Of course, given JJ Abrams' love of keeping a secret, we have no idea what it actually means, but the branding suggests that the title will be at the forefront of the marketing push – a break with the pattern of the prequels, which hid their names behind *Episode I/II/III* deflector shields.

Principal photography has now wrapped – including, *Variety* reports, a single action sequence shot on IMAX cameras – but it seems that plenty of big names found their way onto the Pinewood Studios set. Presumably the security was handled by stormtroopers or someone similarly inept.

Benedict Cumberbatch revealed on *The Graham Norton Show* that he'd paid a visit – we're not sure if it was for a cameo or to catch up with his old *Star Trek* chum JJ – and Daniel Radcliffe stopped by too. "The overwhelming atmosphere of the place is just so exciting," said a man who knows a fair bit about blockbuster movie franchises. "For Harrison Ford, who has been doing these films for so long, to be so excited about the new ones is an amazing sign."

Beyond *Episode VII* – sorry, *The Force Awakens* – it's been confirmed that Gareth Edwards' 2016 standalone *Star Wars* movie will also shoot at Pinewood. And as we get within a year of the new movie's release, you can fill the urge to see *Star Wars* on the big screen. On Saturday 13 December, the BFI will host *Star Wars* Day, with screenings of the original trilogy (Special Editions, naturally), and some surprise special guests. **SFX**





NICK SETCHFIELD'S DEVELOPMENT HELL

Your monthly glimpse into Hollywood's hoped-for future

BROCK AND ROLL! CAPTAIN AMERICA CIVIL WAR

► We know Tony Stark is set to bring conflict to the third *Captain America* movie, laying the ideological smackdown over the Superhuman Registration Act. But who'll be the film's true villain? Word is *Winter Soldier*'s **Frank Grillo** will reprise his role as Hydra operative Brock Rumlow, better known as Crossbones in the comic books, and may earn promotion from henchman to chief nemesis (we like to imagine him perfecting his triumphant cackle and swatting up on *World Conquest*

For Dummies). Also adding to the villainy quotient is *Inglourious Basterds*' **Daniel Bruhl**, signed to play an unnamed antagonist who's rumoured to segue into the *Doctor Strange* movie. "With Daniel's ability to deliver intense, nuanced performances, we knew we had found yet another great actor to share the screen with some of our biggest heroes," says Marvel supremo **Kevin Feige**.

GIRL POWERS! GLASS CEILING

► So what's the future for the *Spider-Man* franchise? There's still no firm word on a new screen

adventure for Peter Parker but Sony is said to be plotting some further web-slinging brand extensions. *Glass Ceiling* is reportedly the working title of a movie uniting the major female players in the Spidey-verse – Spider-Girl, Spider-Woman, Silk, Silver Sable, Firestar and the Black Cat. This is the project *Burn Notice*'s **Lisa Joy** was hired to script earlier this year. At the more preposterous edge of the rumour-web lies word that Sony's also developing an Aunt May solo movie, shifting focus from her weekly trips to the cardiologist to spotlight her heretofore

unsuspected younger days as a kick-ass espionage agent. We want to believe this is true if only to see a poster campaign crying "She ain't no aunt! She's pure Mayhem!"

A-HOLES REASSEMBLE! GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY 2

► Director **James Gunn** promises the *Guardians* sequel won't simply rehearse the first film's successes. "It's not about recapturing it," he tells *IGN*, "because *Guardians Of The Galaxy* was really good at what it did... It's about taking the characters in new directions and learning new things about them."

BIONICS 2.0!

THE SIX BILLION DOLLAR MAN

► Steve Austin. Astronaut. A man barely alive. Gentlemen, we can rebuild him... We can make him better than he was before. Better. Stronger. Faster. And distinctly Wahlbergier. Yes, it's official: **Mark Wahlberg** will star in this inflation-adjusted remake of '70s TV hit *The Six Million Dollar Man* (potential sequels include *The Six Trillion Dollar Man*, *The Six Quadrillion Dollar Man* and *Federal Tax Dollars: Who Needs Libraries Anyway?*). Based on Martin Caidin's 1972 novel *Cyborg*, the original series starred Lee Majors as the technologically-resurrected hero, assigned by the US government on espionage missions requiring judicious use of slow-motion. The new version will be helmed by **Peter Berg**, who teamed with Wahlberg on 2013's Navy SEALs tale *Lone Survivor*. Steve Austin's tech is, naturally, set to be updated for the 21st century. We await the high drama of our hero searching frantically for a charging point...

Expect one of those key revelations to be the identity of Peter Quill's father. Gunn says he'll ignore the comic book lore that established Papa Star-Lord as J'son, emperor of the Spartoi empire. "I just thought there was a more interesting way to go for the cinematic universe that was more believable. There's things in the comic that on film were a little too *Star Wars* for me. And I'm not a big fan of the name J'son... We'll find out who his dad is, and it's going to serve the story. It's not going to be like in *The Crying Game*, though, where the big thing was 'He has a penis!'"

HOWL DO YOU DO?

THE WOLFMAN

► Universal continues to disinter its horror icons. Newly prised from the secret, curse-laden vault beneath 100 Universal City Plaza Drive is the Wolfman, set to follow the *Mummy* as part of the studio's Marvel-aping, cross-creature Monsterverse. Universal plans to apply an adrenalinised, modern day spin. "We've tried over the years to make monster movies – unsuccessfully, actually," chairman **Donna Langley** tells *The Hollywood Reporter*. "So, we took a good, hard look at it, and we settled upon an idea, which is to take it out of horror, put it more in the action adventure genre... bringing these characters into the present day and reintroducing them to a contemporary audience." Brace yourselves for *The Fangs And The Furious*...

RENDER UNTO CAESAR!

PLANET OF THE APES 3

► Fate is about to fling a moist pawful of monkey poop in the general direction of Caesar.

"The ape community has fallen apart," the hirsute revolutionary's mo-cap alter-ego **Andy Serkis** tells *Coming Soon*. "There's potential war. He's going to have to lead the apes in darker times. I think it's going to be very powerful." Director **Matt Reeves** is currently shaping the next storyline with returning screenwriter **Mark Bomback**. And he has biblical ambitions for his chimp insurrectionary. Reeves says we'll witness how Caesar "becomes a seminal figure in ape history. He almost becomes sort of like an ape Moses. We're trying to play out those themes and continue to explore human nature under the guise of apes." The next part of the reborn *Planet Of The Apes* saga arrives 28 July 2016.

HELLO, YOUNG LOVERS!

X-MEN: APOCALYPSE

► Just as *X-Men: First Class* substituted key mutants with their younger counterparts, '80s-set sequel *Apocalypse* will recast Jean Grey and Cyclops. Hit-Girl **Chloe Moretz** and Maleficent's **Elle Fanning** are said to be frontrunners for Jean while EastEnder **Ben Hardy**, *The Boat That Rocked*'s **Charlie Rowe** and *Interstellar*'s **Timothée Chalamet** are in the frame for a teenage Scott Summers. *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*' **Oscar Isaac** has signed up to play the eponymous villain, and the story is rumoured to focus on the romance between **Michael Fassbender**'s Magneto and **Jennifer Lawrence**'s Mystique. "I really don't know where she's going to go," says Lawrence of the shape-shifter. "I've had a few conversations about where we'll find her. She obviously needs to be in hiding somewhere." *X-Men: Apocalypse* hits 27 May 2016.

ALSO BURNING



MATT SMITH joining zombie thriller *Patient Zero*... **PAUL GREENGRASS** directing new version of 1984... **CHRIS PRATT** attached to Universal's graphic novel adap *Cowboy Ninja Viking*... **LEE DANIELS** directing possession tale *Demon House*... **CLIVE BARKER** says he's completed second draft of *Hellraiser* reboot... **DJIMON HOUNSOU** in talks for **GUY RITCHIE**'s *Knights Of The Round Table*... **JARED LETO** orbiting the role of the Joker in *Suicide Squad* with *The Wolf Of Wall Street*'s **MARGOT ROBBIE** reportedly up for Harley Quinn... Phillip K Dick's tale *The Crawlers* heading to the screen... **KEANU REEVES** in talks for Tarsem Singh's pre-apocalyptic thriller *The Panopticon*... *Zero Dark Thirty*'s **MARK BOAL** writing video game adap *Uncharted* for Sony... **MICHELLE MACLAREN** confirmed to direct *Wonder Woman*... Warner Bros hiring **SARAH CORNWELL** to script the adaptation of **ANNE MCCAFFREY**'s *Dragonflight*... *Oldboy*'s **PARK CHAN-WOOK** helming SF thriller *Second Born*... *The Raid*'s **IKO UWAI** joining **FRANK GRILLO** in *Skyline* sequel *Beyond Skyline*... **MATT DAMON** joining shrinking comedy *Downsizing* for 20th Century Fox... **SCOTT WAUGH** in negotiations to direct gravity reversal disaster movie *Inversion*... **JACK O'CONNELL** joining **TERRY GILLIAM**'s eternal production of *The Man Who Killed Don Quixote*... **NICHOLAS WINDING REFN** directing LA horror *The Neon Demon*...

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NEXT MONTH # 257

ON SALE WEDNESDAY 7 JANUARY



AGENT CARTER

Marvel's '40s fireball heads up our look at the hottest TV of 2015!

KINGSMAN: THE SECRET SERVICE

Blimey! It's Colin Firth ultraviolence!

BIG HERO 6

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● All contents subject to change. Or is that what the people behind the so-called change agenda want you to think? Go to gamesradar.com/sfx for details.

SUBSCRIBE NOW

Never miss an issue – see page 34.

Filmic Factoids

David Langford explains incontrovertible monster science



► SF writer David Langford has had a column in *SFX* since issue one.
 ► David has received 29 Hugo Awards throughout his career.
 ► His celebrated SF newsletter can be found at <http://news.ansible.co.uk>.
 ► He is a principal editor of the *SF Encyclopedia* at <http://www.sf-encyclopedia.com>.

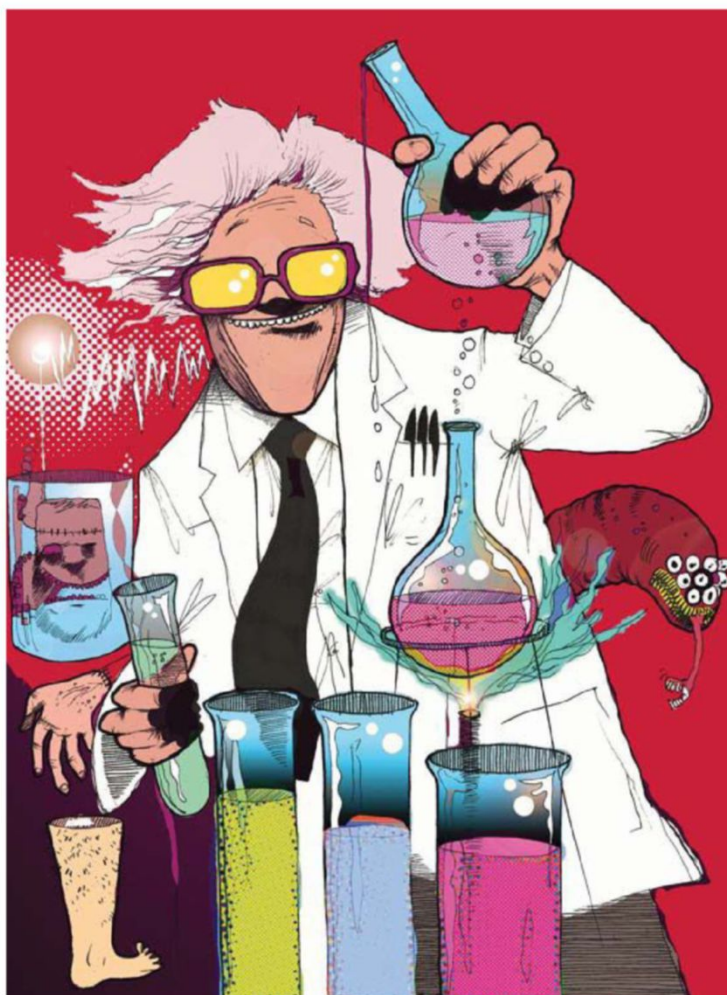
After editing heaps of articles on terrible old SF films, I want to write *The Science Of Monster Movies...* in the great tradition of *The Science Of Star Trek* and *The Science Of Harry Potter*. Things I have learned:

Radiation makes things big. Nuclear testing creates giant ants in *Them!* (the 1954 classic), cosmic rays produce giant wasps in *Monster From Green Hell* (1957), uranium ore causes giantish spiders in *Horrors Of Spider Island* (1959), and a tiny smear of the flesh-eating *Blob* rip-off in *Caltiki, The Immortal Monster* (1959) not only grows but reproduces when a ray-emitting comet skims Earth.

Radiation also mutates things -- fast! Uranium in *The Cyclops* (1957) takes just six months to convert a lost explorer to the title's 25-foot, one-eyed horror. In *Day The World Ended* (1955), World War Three is barely over before radioactive fallout spawns a three-eyed, bulbous-headed monster to menace survivors. Now imagine the script conference where someone asked, "How do we establish that this mutant is whatsername's missing fiancé?" and they remembered that Hollywood werewolves revert to human form on dying. Death reverses the mutation process! I must have missed that particular biology class.

Radiation works differently on different things. *Island Claws* (1980), made soon after Three Mile Island, sees crabs on the Florida Keys enraged by radioactive leakage from a local reactor. They attack communities in terrifying scenes of stock footage. But thanks to an aspect of radiation known to physicists as "limited effects budget", only one crab becomes traditionally huge. Unable to beat its chest like King Kong, it roars and sticks out its tongue, reducing the audience to fear-crazed giggles.

You are what you eat. Any animal-derived wonder drug will infect victims with horrid



animal traits. Bat's blood spoils your social life by turning you into Batman, or rather into *The Vampire* (1957). Wolf blood serum: a werewolf in *The Mad Monster* (1957). Alligator DNA: *The Alligator People* (1959). I don't think wasps make royal jelly, but as a beauty treatment it has tiresome side-effects in *The Wasp Woman* (1959). Bee royal jelly: *Invasion Of The Bee Girls* (1973) ... and so on to the recent *District 9* (2009), where bodily fluid from alien prawns causes the hero to develop a prawn arm with Secret Prawn Powers.

This is such a whiskery SF cliché that PG Wodehouse spoofed it in a 1926 story where film addicts discuss the serial *The Vicissitudes of Vera* (a dig at *The Perils of Pauline* from 1914), featuring a mad scientist planning to give our heroine a

Crabs attack in terrifying scenes of stock footage

spinal injection of lobster-gland extract and turn her into a lobster. Because that's what mad scientists do.

Dinosaurs are our favourite monsters.

Practically every lost realm unknown to map-makers contains a few. For example, they turn up far underground in Jules Verne's *Journey To The Centre Of The Earth*, whose 1959 film reveals the surprising fact that dinosaurs looked just like modern iguanas with fins stuck on. This is because... but you're already ahead of me.

Other worldly dinosaurs even turn up in the singularly unconvincing *King Dinosaur* (1955), where we're firmly told that an ordinary lizard enlarged through the magic of rear projection is a T-rex, crawling on four legs. Couldn't the studio lizard-wrangler have trained it to rear up a bit?

Lost worlds tend to explode. Especially if named Atlantis. An obscure tectonic condition called "fear of anticlimax" means that our explorers can rarely escape to civilization without the lost realm first being destroyed by volcanoes, earthquakes, tsunamis, or preferably all three. It's no way to promote tourism. **SFX**

David Langford just vanished under a Richter 9 lava tsunami.

Deep below the University,
there is a dark place.
Few people know of it: a broken
web of ancient passageways
and abandoned rooms.
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and she is full of mysteries . . .



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Gremlin Growth

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When you own a pet you want to spoil them. But some pets need to be kept in their place. Ignore a few simple rules and your cuddly buddies shed their fur and become scaly sinister minions of mayhem.

There's a new 30th anniversary Blu-ray edition of *Gremlins* out. I've been able to relive every exciting scene – from the moment Gizmo is bought at a mysterious antique store in Chinatown to when he gets that first glass of water accidentally spilled on him to the horrible aftermath – and I couldn't be happier. When I first saw *Gremlins* in the cinema I was 12 years-old and after *ET*, I expected producer Steven Spielberg to put out another kids' movie. I was wrong (turns out it's horror with heavy-drinking reptilian troublemakers who try to blow up a town) but of course, I was hooked.

That's what was great about the '80s. A kid could watch a movie that seemed initially harmless – *Ghostbusters*, *Temple Of Doom* or even *The Dark Crystal* – and walk away with nightmarish scenes – that skinless taxi driver, Mola Ram's evil antics, and the life-draining Skeksis birds – stuck in their tiny skulls forever.

Gremlins is part of that rich tapestry of terror that I now carry around as a grown-up fan of horror films. That head-canon is the reason I like to be scared at the movies, to release all that pent-up real-life stress. It's like riding a rollercoaster without worrying about ending up with a herniated disc. It's an adrenaline rush with popcorn.

Nowadays, kids are too sheltered. If *Gremlins* were to be released today, it might be slapped with an R rating in the United States because of silly little things like the gremlins getting drunk in a bar and, oh, trying to kill all the townsfolk. Spielberg himself suggested to the MPAA that all future movies like *Gremlins* get a PG-13 rating to



keep younger viewers pure. But the original script, penned by *Harry Potter* director Chris Columbus, was meant to be even darker: Billy's dog would have been devoured, and his mom decapitated. Imagine that image stuck in your juvenile psyche.

The bar scene was bad enough for me. Dorry's Tavern, overrun with gremlins drinking, brawling, gambling, dancing and even flashing each other, taught me that all bars were this rowdy. It was only when I visited a hostelry as an adult that I realised (most) patrons don't bash pint glasses on each other's heads and dance on the bar.

But you know what? I didn't only take the negatives on board. *Gremlins'* heart was, somewhere in there, pure. Billy (Zach Galligan) is relatable, coming from a middle class family

The little monsters even join in the holiday spirit by carolling. Well, screeching. But at least they tried. And gremlins using a snow plough to kill humans is festive, right? Right. It's heartwarming.

While the sequel never lived up to the original, there's already talk of a *Gremlins* remake from Warner Bros. A lack of animatronics would probably remove some of the charm, but to be honest, I'd love to see those crazy critters back on the big screen again. I can only imagine what kind of trouble they could get into with today's technology. And let's make it Christmas again. But remember: a gremlin is for life... **SFX**

Bonnie still visits every mysterious antique store she can find. No mogwai yet.

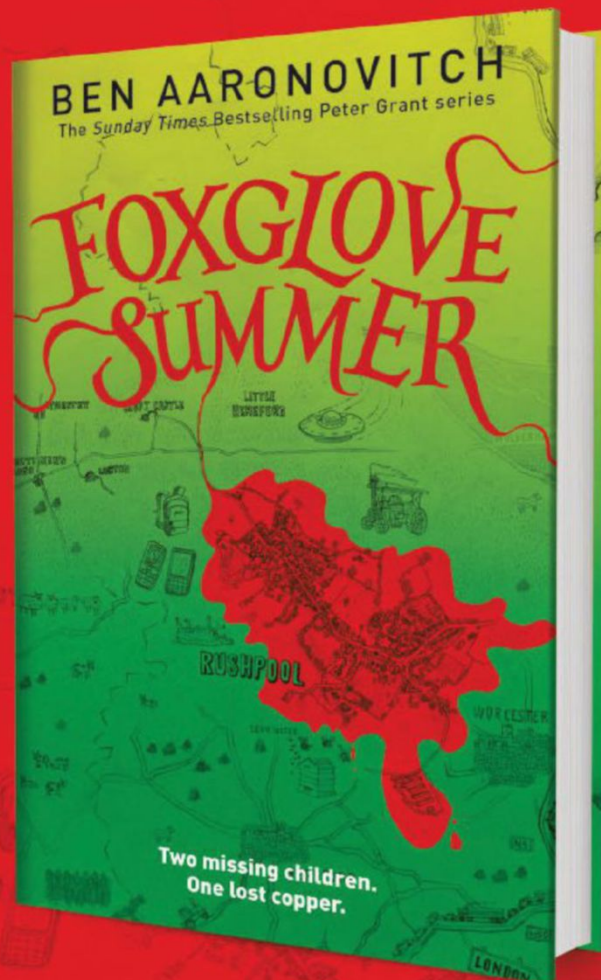


Our columnist Bonnie Burton, a San Francisco-based author, has written a number of books including her latest – *The Star Wars Craft Book*. Bonnie appears on the massive "Geek & Sundry" and "Stan Lee's World Of Heroes" YouTube channels. More of her writing can be found at www.grrl.com.

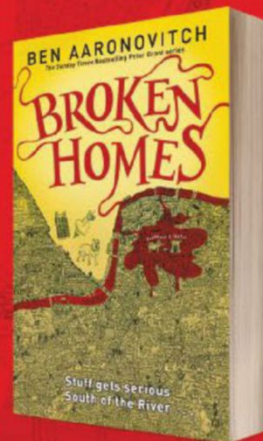
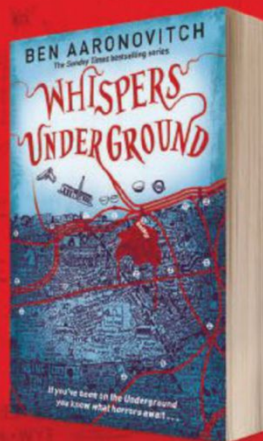
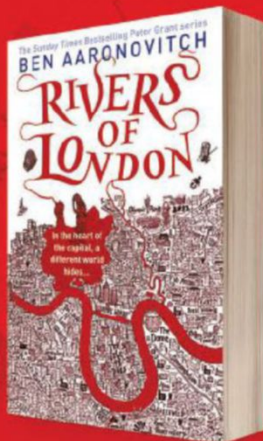
I'd love to see those crazy critters back on the big screen

who are finding it hard to make ends meet. Love interest Kate (Phoebe Cates) has her own troubles, including a dad who – in an equally disturbing and hilarious story – accidentally died while playing Santa. They're just trying to make their way in a small town occupied by a bunch of small minds. The gremlins help them realise their affection for each other. And because the movie takes place during Christmas, it's somehow less horror and more holiday classic. *Gremlins* hide in the Christmas tree and use it to attack Billy's mother.

Peter Grant: Back on the case but lost in the country.



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Rich

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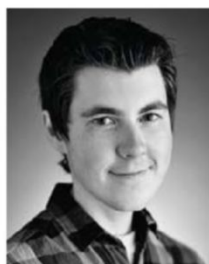
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THIS MONTH'S LETTERS COMPILED BY

Jordan Farley,
Community Editor

► This month's mailpod was fit to bursting, with the *Ghostbusters* reboot announcement (and remakes of other '80s classics) going down like a fetid fart in one of those classy tea rooms. But there was a lot of love for Peter Capaldi's egg-like Doctor and our *Ghostbusters* special!

WRITE IN AND WIN!

The month's star letter writer - lucky old Neil Hartman - gets a pair of brilliant prizes from Black Library, and you could too



if you write in with something worth reading. Neil will receive *Horus Rising* (the first book in Black Library's *Horus Heresy* series) which covers the

start of the Warhammer 40,000 universe, and Garro: *Shield Of Lies*, an audiodrama which takes *The Horus Heresy* in a mysterious new direction...



Left to right: Bad egg, good egg.

EGGS-CELENT ANALOGY

Peter Capaldi's 12th Doctor is an egg. Bear with me, I am going somewhere with this. He's an egg in terms of versatility. He's sometimes:

Hard boiled - solid, stern, dependable and unmovable.

Soft boiled - appearing externally rigid yet still soft on the inside (this may also explain his view on soldiers).

Poached - displaying more idiosyncrasies than previous incarnations of the Doctor since the 2005 revival.

Fried - hot and spitting with zeal and energy bubbling up from beneath.

Scrambled - beautifully muddled with a definite off-kilter view of people, relationships and the human condition.

He is truly alien and sublime in his portrayal of our beloved Time Lord. Losing the lovey-dovey

"Eggs may also explain his view on soldiers"



approach with companions going gooey eyed over him is a breath of fresh air. Such a shame that the weak scripts haven't given Peter the chance to make this eighth series the spectacle that it deserves to be.

Neil Hartman, Barry

► Now you mention it, I reckon Peter Capaldi's Doctor is more like a piece of streaky bacon - lean, a little bitter, but great with pancakes and maple syrup (note: SFX does not condone consuming Time Lords, however tasty).

THIS COULD BE YOU! EMAIL [SFX@FUTURENET.COM](mailto:sfx@futurenet.com)



HOT TOPIC SHOULD '80S CLASSICS BE REMADE?

I think the remake of *Ghostbusters* is a bad idea for various reasons. Chiefly, it's disrespectful to the fans who have waited years for a continuation of their favourite film series. It's also a silly idea from a dramatic standpoint. It never had to be *Ghostbusters 3*, but a film set in the *Ghostbusters* universe. Imagine that Janine's daughter, out to prove herself, starts her own Ghostbusting firm. Cast Emma Stone as Janine's daughter. Job done. An all female cast is a great idea. The reboot idea is not.

Neil Larrisey, email

There's a reason these movies have stood the test of time. They were made with heart, passion and old school thinking out of the box. The characters were memorable and relatable. This need to reboot a classic, or create utterly unnecessary prequels is really starting to grate my carrot. Just because you can, doesn't mean you should. However, when it comes to something with potential that staggeringly failed to deliver, that's a different story. Remakes should be done if there's a need to capture lost potential, not to make a buck.

Michael Van Kesteren, Facebook

I had no problem with the ideas being thrown about for the new *Ghostbusters* until that fatal word, "reboot", was mentioned. You can easily put a different cast in the present canon because Venkman's whole plan in the original was to make money, this included franchising. This is explored in the recent(ish) videogame where you play a new kid who trains with the original *Ghostbusters*, testing new equipment. That's set in 1991, so fast forward to now and it can still work.

Antony Blunt, Facebook



The Thing (1982): a different kind of '80s remake.

How many remakes of '80s classics have actually been worth watching? I honestly can't think of any. I'm on my way home right now after taking my five-year-old to see *Ghostbusters* at the cinema and we all enjoyed it thoroughly, so the "making it relevant to the next generation" argument is cobblers as well.

Rob Perry, Facebook

Should '80s classics be remade? Definitely, but not half-arsed, and it depends on the movie in question. Put a good spin on it, top special effects and lots of laughs.

Kelvin Croker, Facebook

Depends on the film. If it was poor to start with, then yes. But otherwise there's no point.

Richard Dixon, Facebook

Remakes are like sequels: you should only make them if there's something new to say about them. In the '80s, they got this right with *The Fly*, *The Thing* and more. Nowadays, they've no idea what to do with the source material.

Nicholas Peat, Facebook

► An all-female *Ghostbusters* is a great idea. A reboot, I'm not so sure. I've always thought remakes should be limited to rubbish stuff with potential, like *Hawk The Slayer* (Oi, watch it! – Dave B).

THE EYES HAVE IT

While I agree with your old review of *Oculus*, which said that the movie's events are left open



Is Oculus open or closed? It's in the eye of the beholder...

to interpretation; I don't feel it is that open-ended. Scenes of the supernatural outside the lead character's point-of-view definitely skew it in one direction. It is a good movie, but not quite a psychological masterpiece. And I certainly disagree with Gary Rose's letter from your last issue which claimed that "it's quite clear Kaylie was mad in the first place." What film were you watching, Gary? The whole point of the film was that we weren't sure.

Timothy Williams, Richmond

► I love films that leave their events open to interpretation. Take *Inception*. I still find myself thinking about that blasted spinning top years later. If it had simply fallen over that ending would lose all its magic.

GOING THE DISTANCE

I would like to say how grateful I am to once again be able to read your printed magazine. I used to read *SFX* all the time when I was

"You should only do a remake if there's something new to say"

living in England but as soon as I moved to Japan I was unable to purchase it anywhere. I went without your magazine for years, missing updates on movies, games and the like. Now I am able to get a hold of your printed magazine and I can once again get all the information that I crave. As long as my outlet continues to sell me your magazine I'll be your number one fan from Japan.

Simon Phillips, Amagasaki

► Happy to hear you've found us again Simon! I'm quite intrigued by this "outlet". Is there a black market for irreverent UK sci-fi mags in the heart of Amagasaki?

WINCHESTER WOES

In *SFX* 254 you tell us that – despite the fact *Supernatural* is not being broadcast – we should take some comfort that the season nine DVDs were being released on 20 October. Well cometh the day and not a single DVD has passed my letterbox for, as it turns out, the ➔



"Right guys. Look moody. Moodier. That's not nearly moody enough for DVD."

THIS MONTH IN SCI-FI HISTORY

SFX 192
March
2010



Hayao Miyazaki grants us a rare audience to talk *Ponyo* and Kevin Feige spills on Marvel's post *Iron Man 2* plans.

5 YEARS AGO

SFX 127
February
2005



The opening scene of *Star Wars* tops our 50 greatest effects list and David Boreanaz chats life after *Angel*.

10 YEARS AGO

SFX 61
February
2000



We peep behind the scenes of *Angel*'s first season and report that *Good Omens* is heading to the big screen.

15 YEARS AGO

ask the SFXperts

If you can't remember it, we can! Your sci-fi problems solved...

WORLD WAR Z

◻ I remember a TV play in the mid '80s. It starts with a teenage girl living on a farm; a man appears pushing a cart and wearing a full lab suit. He tests the water, takes off his gear and proceeds

to swim in the river. He and the girl become friends, but it all goes wrong.
Paul Drinkwater, Cheadle Hulme

IAN SAYS:

That's *Z For Zachariah*, a BBC Play For Today from 1984, based on Robert C O'Brien's YA book

of the same name. The "something" you refer to is a nuclear war, which fortuitously leaves 16-year-old Ann's remote valley mostly unscathed. Ann's happy to have company at first, but scientist John Loomis gradually becomes more controlling and sinister... Sadly it's not available on DVD. A movie version starring Chris Pine is in the works.



Lost in a sea of sci-fi ignorance? Think you might be having a fantasy, er, fantasy? Send questions to sfxperts@futurenet.com. Want to be a guest SFXpert? Head to www.sfx.co.uk/SFXperts to see a list of unanswered questions.

SOAPOX SFX WRITERS' PERSONAL RANTS

Ian Berriman spends his Christmas Day grumbling at light entertainment



So I love *Doctor Who*. Always have. Always will. But there's one type of episode I struggle to work up any enthusiasm about: the Christmas specials. Don't get me wrong: I'm pleased that the advent of this recent tradition means we get an extra adventure every year. But does that yuletide trip in the blue box really have to be so damn *Christmassy*?

The thing is, *Doctor Who* is fundamentally not a Christmas show. This is the subject of much revisionism these days, but it remains a fact. It's why, for the complete 26-year run of the original series, nobody ever dreamed of such a thing. It's why the very notion of a Christmas special came as such a surprise when the first one was announced in 2005.

For me, *Doctor Who* is an autumnal show, a thing of shadows, not naturally cosy or heart-warming. Christmas TV is a very different beast; okay, for the residents of Albert Square the 25th may mean agonising gloom, but generally it means cloying sentimentality wrapped in tinsel.

It's also tiresomely uniform. Since every series feels compelled to dress itself in festive trappings, the schedule all looks alike. The great joy of *Doctor Who* is that it's so

different from week to week – and so unlike any other series. The more Christmas trees and angels and snowmen are shoehorned into the show, the more *ordinary* it starts to look. That's why my favourite Christmas special is the one which downplays all that: part one of "The End Of Time".

Couldn't we follow the example of the BBC's classic *Ghost Story For Christmas* strand of the '70s instead, which adapted spooky tales by the

Doctor Who is simply not a Christmas show

likes of MR James? Placed in the midst of the sickly sweetness of the December 25th schedules, something properly chilling would be a welcome palate cleanser. And you can be certain it'd still be a ratings smash.

This year, at least, there is a ray of hope: in Peter Capaldi we finally have a modern Doctor whose attitude to the festive season will surely be the same as mine: a scowling, "Bah, humbug!" I'm kinda hoping he gives Nick Frost's Santa Claus a Glasgow kiss...

"Is it too much to ask for British fans to see *Supernatural*?"

release has been delayed.

A week you ask? A month? Nope, it has been delayed until October 2015! Bearing in mind season ten has just started airing in America that is totally out of order! Is it too much to ask for British fans to actually see it? The show has fantastic support over here and yet we fans are treated like poor relations by the broadcasters and the distributors.

Annie Kenney, email

For a show with a hugely passionate fanbase it's baffling why *Supernatural* has had such shoddy treatment in the UK, especially of late. A channel picking it up over here seems unlikely now, but if anyone from Amazon or Netflix is reading: you'd be wise to snap up seasons nine and ten.

WHO YA GONNA CALL?

I just had to send this email to say a very sincere thank you for your recent, fantastic special edition: *The Complete SFX Guide To Ghostbusters*. I've always enjoyed reading your Special Editions, but I have to say that this one has to be my favourite. It is an extremely well put together special, with some great behind the scenes photos, interviews and well researched facts about the movies. I particularly liked the fact that you decided to include the spin offs such as the animated shows, the comics and the video games, making this the most indispensable

guide to the *Ghostbusters* phenomenon ever printed. Please keep up the good work.

Paul Stentaford, Taunton

It was only the absence of a line about how rugged and manly Will Salmon, the fine fellow who edited our *Ghostbusters* special, is that convinced me he didn't write this heart-warmingly effusive letter himself. Thanks for your kind words Paul!

GOTHAM DISSECTED

I've got a few problems with *Gotham*. Let's break it down: very cheesy opening with a pint sized Catwoman prancing about the rooftops. The death of the Waynes felt very stagey. The guy playing Jim Gordon looks like a lab-grown cross between Ed Norton and Shia LaBeouf. *Gotham* police department can't afford lighting? Is everyone going to be pensionable by the time Bruce Wayne puts on the suit? Show, don't tell. Look it's the Riddler! The Penguin! A little girl called Ivy who likes plants! I wonder who that comedian could be? *Lame*. The Penguin kills a fisherman for a sandwich? Barbara Gordon is a supermodel with a penthouse or something? Is this for real? I'll probably watch a few more but I can't see it improving.

Neil Hickman, Stourbridge

I'm quite enjoying *Gotham*. It isn't appointment telly at the moment, but give it time. I've got a feeling it could be great.

SFX 2.0

With *SFX*'s TV and film reviews going to Gamesradar.com does this mean your book reviews will no longer be online? I tend to use your book reviews more than your TV or film ones. And on a practical



IMAGES: KOBAL (1)



Not quite the real thing – but *Star Wars Rebels* will do until *The Force Awakens*.

note please tell me there is a way to filter out the game stuff from the new site?

Cherry Wolfe, Melbourne

► Ah yes. In case the rest of you haven't heard, SFX.co.uk and GamesRadar have joined forces to create a new gargantuan site for all your entertainment needs, GamesRadar+. To address your concerns Cherry: books coverage will still be part of our online mix, and yes, we have our own dedicated page – gamesradar.com/sfx – which will only show you SFX-relevant sci-fi and fantasy stuff. And the magazine will remain completely unaffected by the changes online.

REBEL YELL

It's a good time for *Star Wars* fans. *Rebels* has just launched, and while it doesn't quite match the standards of *The Clone Wars* latter seasons, it's definitely got potential. And, of course, we have JJ Abram's new *Star Wars* film to look forward to next year. But I can't help feeling like they're desperately engaging with our nostalgia genes to keep us interested. Some of the things that have made me grin the most about *Rebels* are the designs of Zeb and Chopper, and the internal layout of the Ghost. Quite aside from the worry that soon there won't be any of Ralph McQuarrie's original sketch books left to plunder, I just

TALES OF WAR FROM THE GRIM DARKNESS OF THE FAR FUTURE
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LETTERS

WAHF

WE ALSO HEARD FROM

● **Fahri M Fahri** ("What happened to *The Black Hole* remake?"); ● **Iлона Kosmowsky** (drawing our attention to *Saving Hope* on Watch); ● **David Jasper** ("I want a *Monster Squad* remake"); ● **Keith Tudor** (also angry about *Supernatural's* poor treatment on this side of the pond); ● **Andrew Naish** (yes, there is an SFX page on GamesRadar+); ● **Steve Hyett**, **Paul Baker**, **Alex Donielle**, **Strickland Morazan**, **Jamie Cross**, **Andrew Gaskell**, **David Turley**, **Eduardo Cruz**, **James Hardwick**, **Stuart Owen**, **Kath Pearson**, **John Pressley**, **Craig Henderson**, **Andrew Sidebottom**, **Joy Dehany**, **Mike McGannon**, **Mike Williams**, **Henry Fong**, **Marty Runnacles**, **Stephen Saul**, **Daniel Thomas Johnson**, **Marc Farmer**, **Ian Gleeson**, **Richard Dyke**, **Peter Batchelor**, **Dan Dodge**, **Kirsty Leanne** and many more (all against the idea of remaking classic '80s films); ● **Toke Kristof Eld** ("*Highlander* could easily be remade into something much better" Better? Sacrilege!); ● **Melanie Hollier** ("If anyone touches *Big Trouble In Little China* there will be hell to pay!"); ● **Martin Wells** ("Everything is remade eventually" Profound); ● **Shaun Watson** ("I think Hollywood should turn its attention to movies that flopped and see if they can be fixed"); ● **Elaine Towndrow** ("The '80s was the best decade"); ● **Paul S Brewer** ("It depends. *The Karate Kid* remake was a better film, but I still preferred the original"); ● **Cato Larsen** ("There is a little voice in my head that says: what if they were made with today's technology?"); ● **Amy James** (really enjoying the first few episodes of *The Flash*); ● **Stuart Hoffman** (thought *Interstellar* was the best space film since 2001); ● **Donna Ferry** (Not sold on *The Force Awakens*); ● **Dustin Wynn** (watched one episode of *Forever* and gave up); and many, many more...



Moon eggs: pretty shoddy science for a Doctor.

CALLING ALL COLLECTORS!

Do you have an amazing piece of sci-fi and fantasy memorabilia? Want to find out how much your most prized treasure is worth? You're in luck! SFX is launching a new regular feature called **Cash In The AT-AT**, where we'll give you the chance to get your favourite item valued by the experts at Vectis auctioneers (www.vectis.co.uk). It's SFX's answer to the *Antiques Roadshow*!

Send us a photo of your favourite item with a few words about what it is, where you got it and what it means to you to sfx@futurenet.com, using the subject line Cash In The AT-AT, and you could soon see your memorabilia on the pages of SFX. Photos need to be in focus, well lit, at least 1000 pixels wide, and preferably photographed against a plain background – otherwise we won't be able to use them.



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Wishlist

Illustrating what you want to see in new SF films and television.

This Month: Fire up the percolator as *Twin Peaks* makes a comeback

Twin Peaks

YOUR TOP 5 REQUESTS

BOB Back

1 The death of Frank Silva, along with several of the *Twin Peaks* cast, has left David Lynch and Mark Frost with a conundrum: write much-loved characters out, or recast? Silva was one of a kind as Killer BOB, but Shaun Delleanty has the perfect replacement: "Ray Wise to represent BOB."

Continuation and Closure

2 After leaving the mystery hanging for two decades, most of all you want answers to *Twin Peaks*' biggest questions. "A continuation and not a reboot," says Mark Howe. Meanwhile, Simon Fulfit Frost echoes many by saying "Lynch to have complete creative control. Closure for the important characters."

Some Questions Unanswered

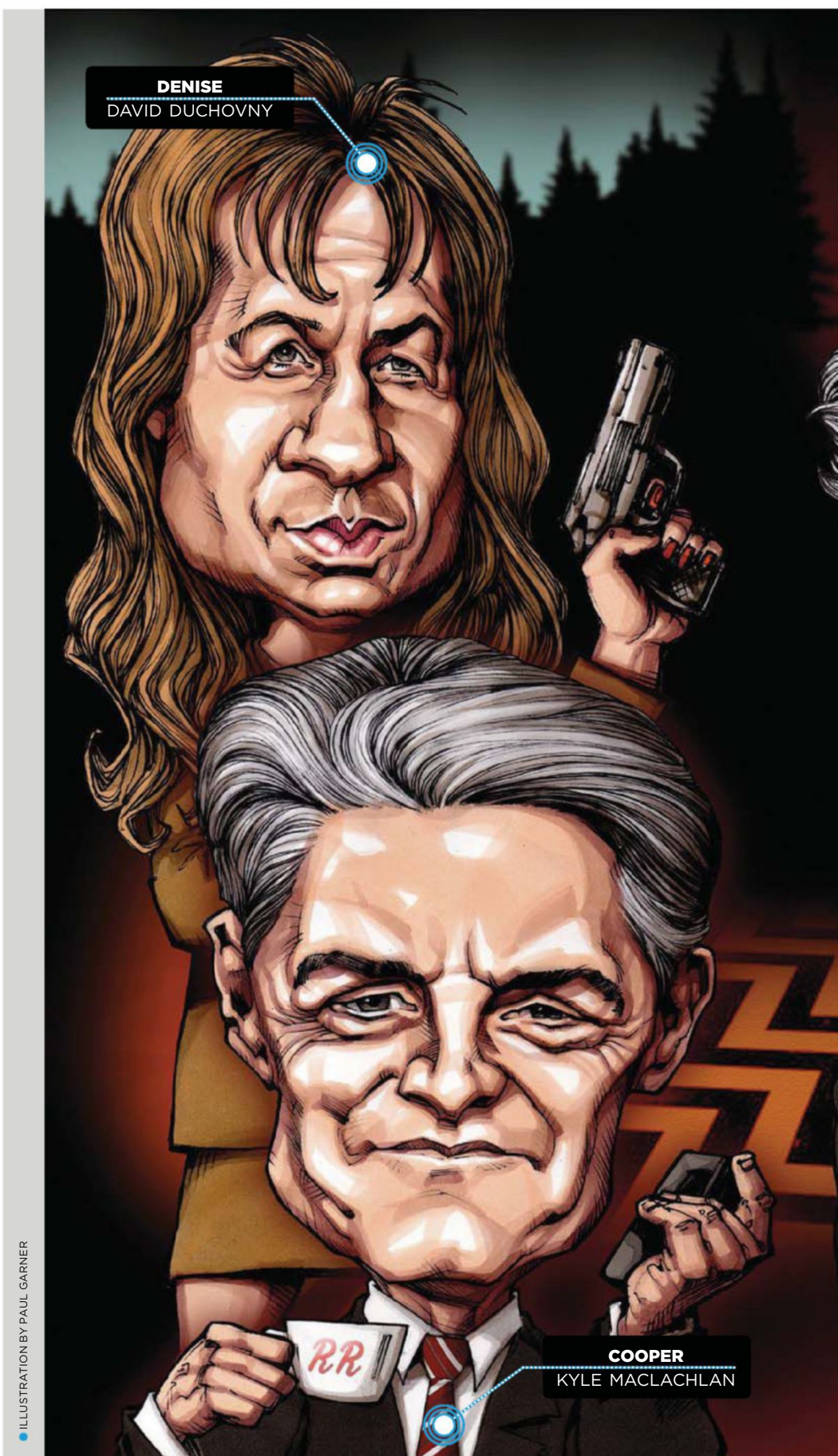
3 "It should be completely random, just like the original series, and should leave the viewers scratching their heads at the end going 'What did I just watch!' If there isn't an outcry about it being off-the-wall, and not explaining everything, when it wraps then it has not done its job," says Belle Tain-Summer, hitting the nail on the head.

Angelo Badalamenti

4 *Twin Peaks* was groundbreaking in a lot of ways, but one of its most crucial ingredients was Angelo Badalamenti's unforgettable soundtrack. Kirsty Leanne wants more. "I would like the new season to stick to its unique music roots."

Denise

5 The return of Coop and co is inevitable, but you want to make sure one of the show's strangest characters isn't forgotten. "Denise to return!" says Paul Downey. But Marc Farmer gets to the heart of what we all *really* want. "David Duchovny in drag."



DENISE
DAVID DUCHOVNY

COOPER
KYLE MACLACHLAN

ILLUSTRATION BY PAUL GARNER



GORDON COLE
DAVID LYNCH

BOB
RAY WISE

LAURA PALMER'S COUSIN
SHERYL LEE

ARE YOU LISTENING?

It's happening again. Hear our readers, Lynch and Frost.

- ▶ The third identical Palmer cousin played by Sheryl Lee. This one with ginger hair! **Anne Boyd**
- ▶ More Chet Desmond and Phil Jeffries. Their new scenes were the best thing about "The Missing Pieces". **Carol Lumbly**
- ▶ A gripping murder mystery. **Jason Taylor**

▶ PLEASE don't bring back James Hurley. His sole purpose in the first season was to be a red herring and his tedious subplot in season two is the worst part of the whole show. **Dave Mulry**

- ▶ As much Gordon Cole as possible. Ideally in every scene. But given that Lynch is directing I'll settle for one appearance every episode. **Fitz Roman**
- ▶ Without the brilliant Don Davis, Bobby could take up Major Briggs' role as a conduit for all the strange happenings in the woods around Twin Peaks. **Megan Woodburn**

▶ Don't forget it's a cheesy soap opera at heart. The mythology is cool, but that's not why I find it so endearing. **Madison Elliot**

- ▶ A plot I can follow! **Ian Ellery**
- ▶ Lucy and Andy's child to be the "new Andy" of the sheriff's department - goofy and inappropriately emotional at crime scenes. **Ed Miles**

▶ The long-promised X-Files crossover. **Mike Barnes**

- ▶ I just want to know what the hell happened to Coop after getting possessed by BOB. **Tomas Becks**

▶ The same amount of weirdness, because that was what made the show! **James Barton**

- ▶ I would like to see the Red Room, flashing lights, strange dialogue, Agent Cooper and Laura Palmer. Let's rock! **Shane Jackson**

▶ I want what David Lynch wants. **Marcel van Driel**

- ▶ Definitely need Coop back to prove he's the true detective, ably assisted by The Log Lady and Catherine Martell who turn out to be twisted sisters of the Black and White lodges. DO NOT bring back James "Yawn" Hurley. **Chris Hormann**

coming soon

Doctor Who and Wonder Woman

Get those creative juices flowing: we want to know what you'd like to see when The Doctor and Diana Prince return.



Send in your ideas about our current Wishlist by visiting bit.ly/SFXwishlist

Event Horizon

Because meeting up is every fan's right

FESTIVAL REPORT

BFI: Days Of Fear And Wonder October-December 2014, nationwide

With the BFI's colossal sci-fi season in full swing, Nina Cromeyer Dieke reports on the story so far

Ambition bridges fact and fiction in a real-life fantasy.



Film lovers getting in the spirit of things.



Local hospital inpatients join in the fun.



There are certainly worse places to watch a film.



Screenings include new releases and older classics.

THE BFI'S DAYS OF FEAR And Wonder programme has been screening sci-fi classics in over 200 locations across the UK to showcase the genre's best and inspire the next generation of filmmakers. This year's season is also giving genre lovers the opportunity to attend talks and Q&As with filmmakers and critics, take masterclasses, and even dance to tunes by DJ Yoda. Programme curator Rhidian Davis says, "This is the genre that has the power to show us our hopes and fears for the future, always at the forefront of innovation in special effects and where things are going."

By the end of the year, the programme will have explored three thematic streams: Tomorrow's World, Altered States and Contact. Special events have included an Afrofuturism weekend, exhibitions from the BFI's National Archive, and a *Star Wars* Day on 13 December. Outside of London, BFI

partnerships have resulted in screenings and events at Bletchley Park, the Eden Project and the Bristol Planetarium, among many more.

One event was the premiere of *Ambition*, a film commissioned by the European Space Agency to mark the ESA Rosetta comet landing on 12 November. The short film, starring *Games of Thrones*' Aidan Gillen and *The Fall*'s Aisling Franciosi, bridges the gap between science fiction and fact by depicting – in stunning special effects – a fantastical event which is in fact reality. It's an innovative collaboration that has not only added filmmaking to the ESA's mantle, but raises the age-old question around the relationship between sci-fi and science. "Sci-fi is the imagined realm of science and technology, and is a laboratory for a lot of ideas," says Davis.

One of those ideas was discussed at the BFI Southbank Reuben Library by sci-fi author Adam Roberts, who asked whether cinema is

the ultimate time travel machine, as it moves us between distant moments and speeds up and slows down time. The library also hosted writer and critic Sophie Mayer, who spoke of the female cyborg as the male-made empty vessel and made the provocative suggestion that non-organic enhancements, like glasses, make cyborgs out of us all!

This, and other stirring concepts, are the fuel that power the stories the programme is celebrating.

"In a world of visual fantasy and the plasticity of the digital image, people want to see where it's gonna go," says Davis. "They want grand narratives that will make sense of this fantasy world. And they want to understand what these technological changes will mean. I think sci-fi does that."

Days Of Fear And Wonder runs until 31 December. A full programme is available at www.bfi.org.uk/sci-fi.

CON REPORT

The Black Library Weekender

7-9 November, The Nottingham Belfry Hotel

Dave Bradley attends the annual event for fans of Warhammer fiction

ALTHOUGH THEY STARTED OUT AS TIE-IN FICTION based on a tabletop wargame, the *Warhammer* and *Warhammer* 40,000 books from Black Library are a bona fide phenomenon. They've become *New York Times* bestsellers and now lead the development of the Games Workshop universe as much as they are based on it. There's a symbiotic relationship between the games, the novels, authors, players and readers, hooked to an immersive body of cross-media stories, so it's perfectly suited to the convention experience. So for the third year fans of *Warhammer* literature gathered in Nottingham to meet authors and chat about Space Marines and the Horus Heresy in relaxed surroundings.

Forget cosplay or loud parties: the arrangement was a welcoming and smoothly run set of talks, with seminars, signings and activities filling the three days. Friday was for premium ticket holders only and was targeted at aspiring writers, its workshops offering the chance to pitch ideas to the Black Library gang.

The rest of the weekend saw a deliberately modest affair spread around the hotel's ground floor, providing ample opportunity to have a pint with the likes of Dan Abnett, Graham McNeill, Guy Haley and many more. The programme of talks vouchsafed insight on the art of writing short stories, how the authors tackle violence and the creation of anti-heroes. On the Saturday evening you could lend your voice to an audiobook or watch *Universally Challenged*, a good-natured but anarchic *Warhammer* 40,000 quiz.

What was clear was how knowledgeable and committed the audience was; despite its relaxed vibe, this was not an event for casual sci-fi fans, with every conversation full of in-jokes and encyclopedic knowledge. If you are a fan of the *Warhammer* universe, especially the Horus Heresy books, then this is pretty much an essential event for you. Details of 2015 events are at www.blacklibrary.com.



Welcome to the sofa, please sit down.



Well no wonder they picked this hotel...



Relaxing with fellow fans: the highlight of any con.

CON REPORT

BristolCon 2014

25 October, Doubletree Hotel

Dave Bradley visits SFX's local literary convention

FANCY A DAY TRIP OUT WEST?

There is a thriving literary SF scene in the west country, as evidenced by the cluster of top quality local novelists who are famous on the wider world stage, folk such as Liz Williams and BSFA Award-winner Gareth L Powell. Over the last few years a single-day event in the autumn has provided Bristol with its chance to herd these folk together and celebrate the genre, and 2014 demonstrated once more what a bustling, chummy convention it's become.

On guest of honour duty were Julian Quayle, Jon Courtenay Grimwood and Emma Newman, and we saw *SFX*'s Jonathan Wright performing interviewing duties. Alas the acoustics in the

main hall were a little quiet at the back but the events were informal and fascinating, and as always the bar was the place to see familiar faces. There was a book launch for Kim Lakin-Smith's *Cyber Circus* and an art zone featuring the likes of Jim Burns. In the evening visitors enjoyed a screening of *Uninvited*, the quiz, or gaming in the dealers' room.

Central to BristolCon is the idea that you can experience it in a single day, you don't have to rent a hotel room or try to rush through a million activities; its compact structure and two strands of book programming on a single Saturday make for a comfortable way to experience an old-school SF con. £30 a ticket on the door is a little steep if you choose to retreat to the bar early on, so making the most of all the day by piling into readings was definitely the wisest strategy. BristolCon 2015 is on Saturday 26 September and guests of honour will be Jasper Fforde, Jaine Fenn and Chris Moore. See you there? Details at www.bristolcon.org.



Guest of honour Emma Newman is watching you. Yes, you.

UPCOMING

Dates meet diary, diary meet dates...

Faebles 2

30 Jan-1 Feb

The cast of cult Canadian show *Lost Girl* descend on the Renaissance Hotel, Heathrow for a fairytale-filled weekend.

www.starfury.co.uk

SF Ball 21

6-8 February

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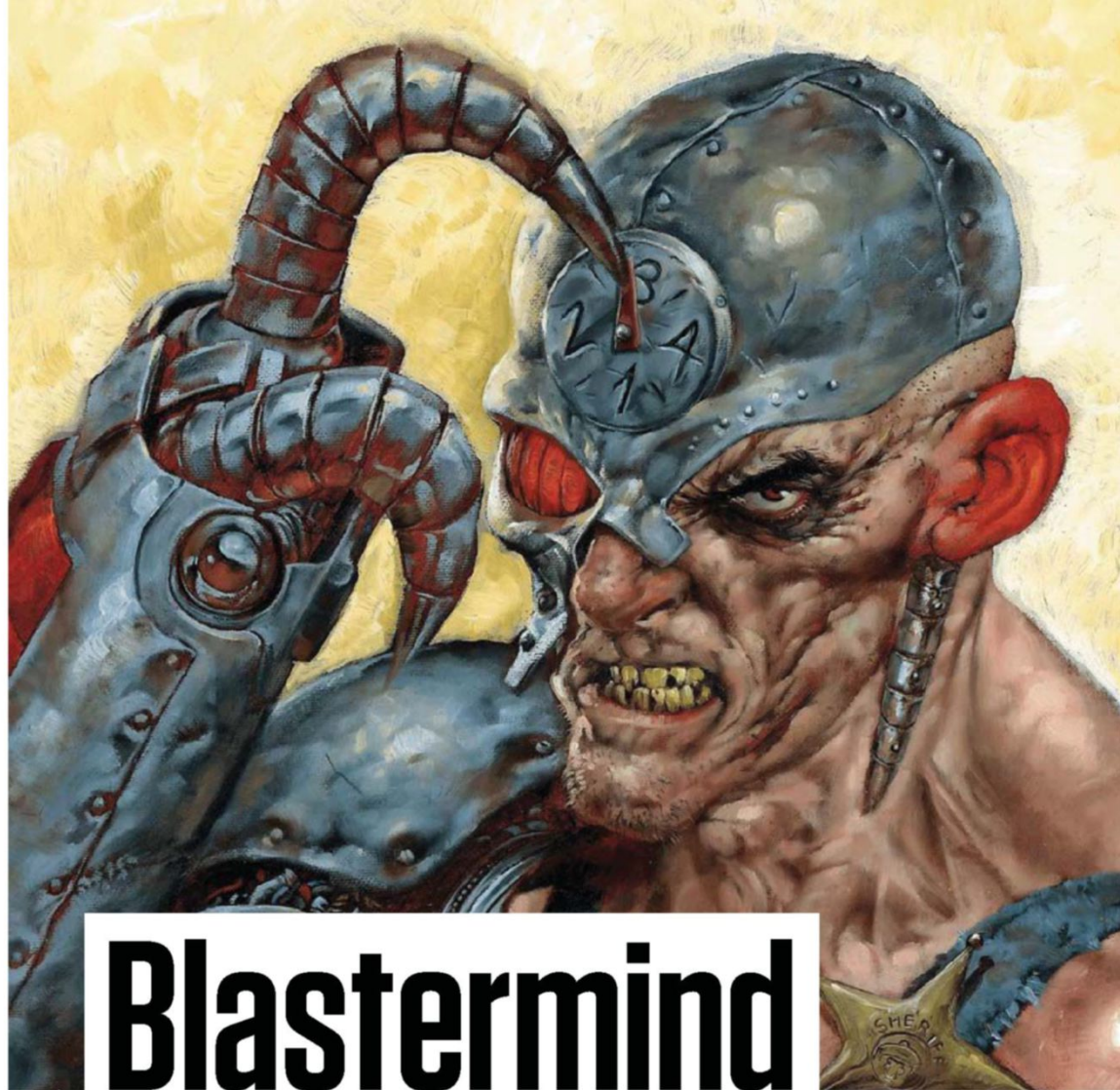
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Blastermind

How much do you know about beings of light?
Calling all Avenging Angels – angels, kick-ass angels



1 In which film did Marius Goring play the heavenly Conductor 71?

2 The film *Michael*, starring John Travolta as a smoking, drinking, swearing angel living with an old lady on Earth, was released in which year?

3 Which author writes the *Blood And Feathers* fantasy books?

4 In which 2010 film does the Archangel Michael protect the Paradise Falls diner from an army led by Gabriel?

5 The Angels of Mons is a popular legend about soldiers receiving supernatural aid. When did the fateful battle take place?

6 Who plays the mutant Angel in *X-Men: The Last Stand*?

7 *Captain Scarlet And The Mysterons* fans: name all five of Spectrum's Angel Interceptor pilots.

8 "I saw... nothing," says *Babylon 5*'s Londo Mollari. Which angelic character did he alone fail to see?

9 Angel is played by David Boreanaz in Joss Whedon's ace vampire TV shows. But what was the character's original human name?



10 What character have John Forsythe and Victor Garber both voiced?

11 Which future Hollywood star faced the Weeping Angels in *Doctor Who* episode "Blink"?

12 In what season does Misha Collins's Castiel first appear in *Supernatural*?

13 Two winged angels come to York and help humans with legal problems. Name the show.



14 In the 2005 film version of *Constantine*, Tilda Swinton plays Gabriel. Who plays Lucifer?

15 Name the world where the *Diablo* video games are set.

16 When did we first see 2000 AD's Angel Gang in print?

17 Which character has been played by both Peter Capaldi (TV) and Benedict Cumberbatch (Radio)?

18 In Tartakovsky's *Star Wars: Clone Wars* animated series, what is The Azure Angel?

19 In which 1995 film does Christopher Walken take on the role of the Archangel Gabriel?

20 Which pair created the TV series *Dark Angel*?

ANSWERS: 1. A Matter Of Life And Death 2. 1996 3. Lou Morgan 4. Legion 5. 23 August 1914 6. Ben Foster 7. Destiny, Harmony, Melody, Rhapsody and Symphony 8. Vorlon ambassador Kosh 9. Liam 10. Charlie in *Charlie's Angels* 11. Carey Mulligan 12. Season four (episode one, "Lazarus Rising") 13. *Eternal Law* 14. Peter Stormare 15. Sanctuary 16. 1980 (Prog 160) 17. The Angel islington in *Neverwhere* 18. Anakin's Jedi Starfighter ship 19. The Prophet 20. Charles H Eglee and James Cameron

HOW DID YOU DO?
Which Angel character are you?



0-5
Doyle



6-10
Cordelia



11-15
Wesley



16-19
Gunn



20
Spike

The World Of SFX

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Brought to you by: Much pizza, the All Blacks at the Millennium Stadium, Derby top of the league (again), lots of new season TV watching, still trying to reach level 30 in *Destiny*, a team outing to see *Interstellar*, finally relenting and switching the heating on, a Lego Star Wars advent calendar, chilli wraps, Make Up And Vanity Set on Spotify, too many sugar-free energy drinks, lost fonts, lost internet, the Squaler



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"Would you like to come and have a look at Buffy?"



The Writing Dead 2

Darren Shan is back to judge our short story competition!

It has clawed its way out of the soil... time to get writing again!

Have you been bitten by the urge to write? Great news: after the groaning success of our first Writing Dead competition early in 2014, *SFX* has once again teamed up with top author and master of horror Darren Shan to find the best original zombie-themed short stories – and *Zom-B* author Darren will once again personally judge your entries!

Your tales can be funny or scary, feature fast or slow zombies, slop on the murder and mayhem, or contain no bloodshed whatsoever. Imagination is your only limit. That and the rules: entries must be no longer than 1500 words and be your own original work. As an added twist this time, they must include at least one zombie in a Santa outfit, and feature christmas tree lights as a prop. Be as inventive as you can...

The latest instalment in Darren's 12-part series, *Zom-B Family*, is on sale now. The series chronicles the journey of teenage protagonist B Smith from a zombie outbreak in Ireland to the death-filled streets of London. B has encountered crazy clowns, teenage "Angels" dedicated to restoring order to the living and Mercenaries who capture B in their traps. It's grisly, fast-paced and guarantees a high body count.

The closing date for entries is Tuesday 3 February 2015. Any submissions received after

this date will not be considered, so don't hang around. All eligible entries will be reviewed by judges from the *SFX* team. The five best will then be passed on to Darren to pick the winner.

All five shortlisted entries will receive a signed set of nine *Zom-B* books published by Simon & Schuster, and the incredibly talented winner will discover their fate when their story is printed in full in *SFX* issue 260, on sale Wednesday 1 April 2015. Plus, they'll get a weird *Zom-B Baby* statue! Get writing, and good luck.

How to enter

Entries should be submitted in Microsoft Word (either .doc or .docx files), via www.gamesradar.com/writing-dead or www.futurecompetitions.com/WritingDead2. Further details can be found at www.gamesradar.com/writing-dead.

Terms And Conditions By taking part, you agree to be bound by the Competition Rules: www.futuretcs.com. Entries must be submitted in the place and format specified above and be received by midnight (GMT) on Tuesday 3 February 2015. Late or incomplete entries, or entries in excess of 1500 words, will be disqualified. Entries are limited to one per individual. Open to all UK residents of 16 years and over, except employees of Future Publishing Limited ("Future") and any party involved in the competition. The winner will be selected by *Zom-B* author Darren Shan in his sole discretion from a shortlist of 5 entries selected by a panel of judges from the *SFX* magazine team. The judge's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. The winner will be notified by email or telephone. There will be four (4) shortlist winners entitled to nine (9) signed books from the *Zom-B* series, and one (1) overall winner who will receive a set of signed books, a baby zombie statue, and their entry will be printed in Issue 260 of *SFX* Magazine. The prize is non-transferable and non-refundable. There is no cash alternative. You will retain all rights you have in the copyright and other intellectual property rights comprising your entry but, by entering the Competition, you grant Future Publishing and its licensees, and the Competition sponsor, the right free of charge to republish your Competition entry in any medium or format. You warrant that the Competition entry is entirely your own work and not copied or adapted from any other source.

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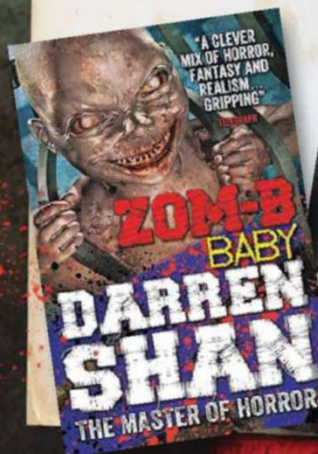


Darren Shan reacts!

The Writing Dead judge shares his thoughts on the inaugural competition's entries...

"I wasn't looking forward to reading the winning entries the last time we did this. I was worried that the standard might be low, and that I'd have to fake enthusiasm. So I sat down to read the five shortlisted entrants with a heavy heart... but it was much lighter by the time I'd finished! All five were excellent short stories, any one of which would have been a worthy winner. I actually had a tough time choosing, and had to read them all through a couple of times before I could trim them down to a single champion. In the end, I was glad I got to read the stories, and honestly enjoyed the experience, so I had no hesitation in agreeing to be a judge again.

I can't wait to see what wickedly twisted treats you guys come up with this time! You can go completely over the top if you wish - many great zombie tales do - but you might want to bear in mind that the most memorable stories are those that add a little something new and unexpected to the genre, not just bucket-loads of gore and de-skulled brains..."



ZOM-B
DARREN SHAN
THE MASTER OF HORROR

DOCTOR WHO

THE SANTA



WHAT'S THIS? FATHER CHRISTMAS MEETS DOCTOR WHO? "I HAVEN'T GONE OFF





CLAUSE



MY ROCKER," STEVEN MOFFAT TELLS NICK SETCHFIELD

STEVEN MOFFAT HAS ONE VERY important stipulation for *SFX*.

"Look," he says, as our chat begins with the *Doctor Who* showrunner. "Kids are bound to read this. So you have to remember. Father Christmas is real. You're not allowed to say that he's not."

It's an unusual request. Has the pressure of masterminding the nation's greatest television show finally broken the man? Of course Father Christmas is real. All sentient beings know that (kids – sentient beings is just a grown-up/show-off way of saying you, your mum and dad, the cat, everyone... well, maybe not your nan after her third cheeky Malibu on Boxing Day). Come on, Steven. You may as well ask us to remind people that doors are useful and gravity's a good idea.

Yes, we know this year's *Doctor Who* Christmas special sees the lord of time face to face with the lord of gift-wrap, brought to the screen in all his big-bellied, bewhiskered pomp by the mighty Nick Frost. But we imagine that inspired piece of casting involved months of delicate brand management negotiation with Claus' people. Or else the cry "Get me Saint Nick!" somehow mutated into "Get me Nick Frost!" Stranger things have happened in Cardiff.

So yes, of course Father Christmas is real. Just don't tell us the Doctor isn't. Deal? ➔

Matt's Doctor always seemed to be Christmas personified. Peter's Doctor strikes us as a Doctor who doesn't really do Christmas. Is that the case?

✴ The Doctor always loves Christmas. The fact that he's putting on a slightly different front from the one he used to doesn't mean anything. He is no more really a grumpy old man than he was a flopsy young man. Fundamentally Christmas is such a sugar rush of bright lights and excitement and rollercoasters that the Doctor couldn't help but love it. Of course he does. He just has fiercer eyebrows now.

You've got Father Christmas in this. Does that feel like you're pushing the boundaries of what *Doctor Who* can do?

✴ We do it properly. Rest assured, I haven't gone off my rocker and forgotten what kind of show it is! His companion is not going to be a Teletubby or anything like that. That's not going to happen. There's a proper sci-fi explanation for the presence of Santa Claus in the Doctor's life. So you can relax on that score. In some ways, of the Christmas specials we've done, this is the one that's most like the normal run of *Doctor Who*. The normal Christmas specials are the over-sugared, sentimental version, and this one isn't quite that. It was lovely to have Father Christmas in the show, because that took care of the Christmas element. The rest of it is very tense sci-fi *Doctor Who*.

Do you see the Doctor existing in the same sort of mythic realm as Santa?

✴ I think in little children's minds he does. I always thought of the Doctor and Santa and Robin Hood and Eric Morecambe as all existing in the same world, the same place in my heart, somehow. It's a moot point as to which is more absurd, the Doctor or Santa. Which of them breaks the most rules of credibility? They do have a sort of absurd-off in the show itself, because neither of them are particularly credible!

What does Nick Frost bring to the role of Santa?

✴ He's perfect. He's not only perfect for Santa in that he physically looks like Santa – younger, but he looks like him – but he's exactly what Santa should be, within the *Doctor Who* universe. He simultaneously subverts it and is sort of definitive. He's the cuddly old Santa but he's a little bit spiky too, and he feels modern. He feels like a modern



Clara was so excited to open her presents she didn't even get dressed.

"Forget 'Am I a good man?', mate. The question is: have you been naughty or nice?"



Elf service: Misfits' Nathan McMullen (left) and Dan Starkey.

"THERE'S A PROPER SCI-FI EXPLANATION FOR SANTA"

Santa in the way that our current Doctors feel like a more modern version of *Doctor Who*. But he also has all the traditional trappings. He's exactly what Santa should be. He will not disappoint you. And he has the perfect name, of course. Nicholas! Frost! Perfect.

How do you go about writing Santa? What's your way into that character?

✴ Well, I feel as though I've always known him! It doesn't feel as though that's a new one for me to do. If you got to meet Santa, what would you ask him – how do you get around all those houses? How do you know everybody's address? We cover all of that. And of course, because he regards himself as a real person – and quite rightly, because he is – he's bemused that anyone would think it was their mum and dad who put the presents out. He regards that as a fanciful fairy tale. Of course it's him. So there's a line – "How do you think those Christmas presents got there every year? By magic?" He doesn't regard himself as any kind of mythical figure. He's a hardworking man. At least once a year.

Do you feel a special responsibility writing Santa and bringing him to kids on Christmas Day?

✴ Yes. You want him to be a great Santa. And when I was a kid I would've loved to have seen Santa on the TARDIS or Santa and the Doctor battling together, Santa and the Doctor snarking at each other... I would have loved those things. So you get all of that. I hope it delivers everything you would want of that.

This Christmas special follows a series that was fairly dark. How does that tone square with Christmas Day?

✴ Well, not all the series was very dark. That's been slightly talked up. People are forgetting "Robot Of Sherwood" or "Time Heist" or "In The Forest Of The Night". We did lots of silly, silly things. Just because Peter frowned at you during them doesn't →



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The Doctor's one Christmas concession: his hole-ridden "snow" jumper.

mean that we're any less barking mad than normal. We certainly pick up the threads of where we were. We don't just say oh, we're stepping aside for Christmas to have a party and then we'll pick up the plot again in episode one. To be fair sometimes we've come close to doing that with the Christmas specials. This time you're going to see the consequences of the last things you saw on screen, and it's played out quite seriously. The darkness really comes from the complexity and the danger in the friendship between the Doctor and Clara. A lovely and wonderful and warm and serious friendship though it is, if occasionally explosive, it's a troubling one. It would trouble you if you saw it. If you were Clara's best friend, you'd be saying "He looks barking mad to me..."

Dan Starkey says there's a touch of an MR James ghost story about this one...

★ Don't tell Mark Gatiss, but I've never read any MR James! I know Mark's read all of it. It's tattooed on his body or something. I must go and read MR James. And watch *Sapphire And Steel*. These are the things people keep telling me I must know a lot about. I don't know anything about either of them! There is some creepy stuff in the Christmas one. It's a bit of a fake-out. At the beginning you'll think it's more of a quite traditional *Doctor Who*, but we do something more complicated than that. But yeah, it's the scariest one we've done. There isn't any question about that. Even though Santa's in it, it's a full-on scary one.

You introduced Michelle Gomez as Missy this year. What appealed to you about the idea of doing a female Master?

★ To be honest, it was initially sort of a gimmick. We were going to bring the Master ➔

HO HO WHO!

Nick Frost is Father Christmas

Does it feel like a biggie when the call comes to do *Doctor Who*?

★ Yeah, of course – and a Christmas episode too. Had I dropped hints to Steven [Moffat]? No, never. I'm not like that. I like to get a job because I was the right person for it, not because I'd followed Steven home from work and sat outside his apartment. I met him when we did *Tintin*. The BBC do a big Worldwide thing in Liverpool each year, and I went this year because of *Mr Sloane*. And I saw him there really cutting a rug. A big hip-hop track dropped and he just went crazy. I took my glasses off. He can move. I thought wow, we have a shared interest in hip-hop, so I'm in.

Did you have to keep your casting secret?

★ I'm not good with secrets at the best of times. I was alright, I didn't say anything. I was close a few times. Having that kind of information... you just think "I'm going to tweet it! I'm going to tweet it! I can't not tweet it! Send!" But yeah, they implant like an exploding bomblet in your neck, and whenever something gets retweeted more than 800 times Steven sets it off.

What's your take on Santa?

★ He's a bit cockney, actually. He's a bit of a geezer, he's a bit hard, and then his alter-ego is "Ho ho ho!". In his interactions with the Doctor there's a weird sense that they kind of know each other. It's never remarked upon, but they certainly had beef in the past, they have some kind of issue with each other. It's like Maggie Simpson and the one-eyebrow baby... they just don't like each other, which is funny to play. I've tried to make him funny and charming, but he also has a weird edge to him.

And you look the part...

★ I never knew that I'd look so good as Father Christmas.

It's such a weird thing. I've got tiny little glasses as well and they're actually Richard Attenborough's glasses that he wore in *The Miracle On 34th Street*. I think I'm just channeling his energy through those spectacles. I'm having a real issue in that I haven't shown my son any pictures of me as Father Christmas because I think it would blow his mind. He's three.

How is it sharing scenes with Peter Capaldi?

★ He's great. He's exactly what the Doctor should be. He's manic and cross and passionate and clever and funny. That's what I want on a Saturday. He's got such a beautiful face, and his eyes are so incredible. And he's a real giggler – who knew that? He said he's only corpsed twice in the series but I managed to get him every day!

Have you had any fanboy moments on set?

★ Oh god, yeah. I had a couple of scenes off so I was having a little snoop around. I turned a corner and there was a Weeping Angel, right outside a toilet... It was so creepy. I thought "I want to do a wee, but what if I come out and it's moved slightly?"



Frosty the Snowman. A jolly happy soul.



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SFX13



Will this be the last Christmas for Clara?

back because the Master always has to return at some point. And I thought okay, this time it's a woman. And then I paced around the house thinking "What does that mean?" The Master never paid the slightest bit of attention to the fact that he was a man, so why does making him a woman make anything different about the show? It's the very thing I always say you shouldn't do – you mustn't be led by the gimmick, you have to have something else there. But for quite a few weeks I was being led by the gimmick. And then I saw Michelle Gomez's name on the list for another part. And I thought, "Oh my god, never mind about casting a woman and whatever that means for the Master... Michelle Gomez as the Master! Now I get that! Now I know what we do with the part, because I know what she can do." And, unusually for me, I was terribly emphatic. She had to turn down the other role because she was busy, and I wasn't sure if she really meant that or if she was just being nice to me. But she wrote to me and said, "I would love to be in *Doctor Who* and I'm really sorry I had to turn it down. If there are ever any other opportunities..." And immediately I thought right, let's get her in for the Master. I was utterly dogmatic about it from that point on. No one else was considered. Just cast her. And I'm not usually like that. I'm usually much more consensus-based. But I just got it into my head that that's who it had to be.

You must have known people would leap on that as proof that a future Doctor could be female...

★ Well, there are several things we've done there. There's been quite a lot of groundwork prepared in the time I've been on the show. The very first thing Matt says is "I'm a girl!" I put a line into "The Doctor's Wife", I put ➔

THE TWELFTH DAY OF CHRISTMAS

Peter Capaldi talks gender swaps and seasonal scares...

Does your Doctor do Christmas?

★ Well, he's in the Christmas edition! I don't think he particularly favours Christmas or is particularly interested in it. It's a very jolly episode but it's also very scary. They've got a really good mix of the frightening and the festive, which is quite difficult to pull off. I think it's in the tradition of festive ghost stories. There's something about the festive season that triggers some kind of supernatural fear or belief, something quite pagan. They have Santa Claus in it, but it's the real Santa Claus. We don't reveal that he's a robot or a monster or an alien being or whatever. He is the actual real deal, and it's not in a bogus fashion. It's very clever how they've managed to pull it off.

The *Doctor Who* Christmas specials are a tradition now. How did it feel making your first?

★ It is, of course, weird doing the whole thing of having snow and Christmas lights and Christmas trees in September, because your body does respond to it. You just start to feel Christmassy. You think, "Oh god, have I done my shopping?" It's very, very powerful, all that. The worst thing about it is that you have so much snow but what you don't see is that the snow machines that make all that snow are incredibly noisy. They sound like the oldest boiler you've ever heard in your life, clattering and battering away. And you know that you're going to be in the studio re-recording all the dialogue, which is what we ended up doing. But it was lovely.

Nick Frost told us he was the one man who could make you corpse on this series. Was it a daily struggle?

★ Yes, because I don't really corpse very much, but he's so brilliant and so funny and he just started to make me laugh. And then of course once he knew he could make me laugh it was a nightmare. So every opportunity he took he would do something else to make me laugh. So there's lots of outtakes of me literally hiding behind monsters when I

shouldn't be laughing – in a very serious scene with very frightening things going on, hiding behind monsters' heads. He's brilliant. I'm a big fan of his. He's a great presence to have and he's just such a hugely gifted comic actor.

The last episode ended with the Doctor and Clara deciding they didn't want to travel with each other.

How does their relationship fare?

★ There's a dilemma that appears which the Doctor has to solve. And she's at the centre of it. So he has to find her again, and he has to help her. But it creates some profound changes in the relationship.

We've just seen the Master regenerate into Missy. Does that bring us closer to a female Doctor?

★ There easily could be a female Doctor. I think the next time might be a female Doctor. I don't see why not. I think it's good to do that. I think with Missy that was just a great idea. You wanted to keep it a surprise and that was the best way to do it, but yes, it does suggest all kinds of interesting stuff. They have a total love/hate relationship anyway but they were both men for a long time, and still have that love-hate relationship, and we will see more of that probably. It's interesting, being able to swap like that. I think it's good.

You're about to go into your second season. Do you feel more ownership of the part now?

★ I feel I know the environment I'm going into, which is good, but I don't think you can ever relax because it's too important and it's too iconic. It needs attention. You can't just leave it. You can't just go "Oh, I know how to do this now", because I don't know how to do it. You just go in and you do your best but not with any great plan. And so I can't relax and say "I'm there now", because I'm not. And that would also be dull, to say we've figured this out. You can't figure it out. You've got to just keep at it, keep seeing where it can go.

**“I THINK NEXT
TIME IT MIGHT
BE A FEMALE
DOCTOR”**

Tangerine dreaming:
Peter Capaldi.



The Christmas walnuts were getting out of hand.

one into "Night Of The Doctor"... In another, slightly more insidious way, you have River Song running around basically being a female Doctor, flying the TARDIS and zapping people with the sonic. And this year you've had Clara doing a bit of that in "Flatline". So you've been softened up. That's what it would look like. It's not so strange after all, is it? So the groundwork has been laid. Whether it ever happens or not, I don't know. But it's certainly a great deal more possible for a mainstream audience to go with it now than it used to be. And that is absolutely true. If you just sprung it on people out of the blue, I wouldn't be so sure. Maybe I'm wrong, but I think now we've had all that it just makes it less alarming. It's really quick, isn't it, when you stop being bemused by the fact that Michelle's female and you start thinking she's great at playing the Master. And given that they're two asexual characters, does it matter that they've switched reproductive organs? They don't seem to use them anyway!

You've just started writing the next series. What do you want to build on?

★ Obviously Peter and Jenna. Well, if Jenna's in it... [laughs]. Just the depth of that companion relationship. We took the Doctor/companion relationship to a place that's much more real, much more damaging and with more consequences. And whoever the companion is, you want to continue that idea. It can be a thrilling, exciting relationship but actually it can be a dangerous one too. That felt quite powerful and potent. What we did this year felt like what it would be like if a young girl got into a very intense friendship with an older time traveller. It's not the romantic version, it's not the thwarted romantic version, it's not the friendship version, it's not the fairytale version or the imaginary friend version. It's probably the version that would actually happen. And when you're a

"THE COSIER A SHOW GETS THE NEARER TO DEATH IT GETS"

few years into the show, once you're actually secure in its fundamentals, you can do that. You can actually play it out as if it's real – often exciting, sometimes a bit dangerous.

And of course Peter's Doctor is established now. Where do you want to take him?

★ In a way we can stop shocking the audience with him. I was looking for the Capaldi moments every episode, saying "We need a Capaldi moment, that moment where he's not Matt Smith, he's not David Tennant, where he's a dangerous, unpredictable, volatile character." Because that slaps the audience awake, in a way. The longer you do a show the cosier it gets, the cosier it gets the nearer to death it gets. You really have to say to people "Pay attention. He's far more unpredictable than that." So now, having done that, and having blasted our new Doctor at them, we can go other places with him. We don't have to work at that anymore because people just accept him. I won't be looking for the Capaldi moment next year because the whole show is a Capaldi moment. **SFX**

"Last Christmas" airs on BBC One on Christmas Day.

ELF SCARE!

Dan Starkey swaps Strax for Santa's little helper...

Presumably this is a light make-up job for you compared to Strax?

★ Relatively, to what I'm usually dressed in! I can actually hear things, so it's been quite different. Usually when I'm in the Strax suit it's like a giant Rolo on my head. With this it's like, "I can see things! I can hear things!" And it's my actual voice. After seven years in a rubber suit I can finally get my own face on screen! It's interesting, there was a repeat of "Planet Of The Spiders" on satellite, and there was Kevin Lindsay, who played Linx [the Sontaran in 1974's "The Time Warrior"], and I was thinking ah, that was like a little treat for him as well! They let him out, playing a slightly dodgy Eurasian!

Do you start to feel quite Spock as the ears go on?

★ Yes, slightly! Franchise crossover! [does Vulcan salute]

What's the tone of this year's Christmas special like?

★ It's got a good mixture of quite humorous bits but also quite dark bits. I think it's going to be pretty frightening too. Even though it's science fiction it's got a nice MR Jamesy Christmas ghost story feel, that kind of corner of the eye horror. I think because it's got laughs in it the scares can be pushed a lot darker. I think some bits will be pretty terrifying.



Do elves have smartphones? Do they take selfies?



BBC

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BBC

Richard Armitage

Thorin's quest is almost over. We quiz the tallest Dwarf on his character's journey

WORDS BY DAVE BRADLEY PORTRAIT BY SARAH DUNN

When *SFX* quips that Thorin Oakenshield "goes a bit bananas" at the end of *The Hobbit*, Richard Armitage breaks into an uncharacteristic laugh. The British actor has a determined, intense look that suits the troubled Dwarf leader, but our observation has him chuckling. "Bananas! Yes, that's the word I was looking for," he says, pretending to take notes about the character he has made his own since his first appearance in 2012's *An Unexpected Journey*. In the climactic final instalment of Peter Jackson's latest Tolkien trilogy, Armitage's character will be overcome by the dragon-sickness and lead his mountain people headlong into the titular Battle Of The Five Armies. As we sit down with him in the polished gentility of London's Claridge's hotel, he's keen to tell us about the mental and physical journey Thorin's undertaken...

BIODATA

► **OCCUPATION:** Actor
► **BORN:** 22 August 1971
► **FROM:** Leicestershire
► **GREATEST HITS:** *Ultimate Force*, *North & South*, *Robin Hood*, *Spooks*, *The Hobbit*
► **RANDOM FACT:** He was named after King Richard III. His parents were "really into the Plantagenets" and he was born on the date of that king's death.

Thorin's gone a long way. How is it to play the darker side of the character?

► It was quite hard to gauge. One of the most interesting things I enjoyed working on was seeing how the dragon infuses Thorin; Smaug gets under his skin and he almost becomes the dragon. He saw his grandfather go mad. The clouds of doom overshadowed his grandfather and his father; so we've always known that these clouds have been gathering. The dragon-sickness. We played around early on when there were only two movies – as he got closer to the mountain and closer to the gold, the illness would start. Now that it's three films, we've had to slightly delay the onset of the illness. So there are certain scenes out of the second

film that we had to readjust so the madness didn't kick in quite so quickly.

The end of the second *Hobbit* film was pretty dramatic. Can we expect even more action in the third film?

► Yes. Without giving too much away there's a huge moment in the beginning of the third

"We prepared for the final battle a year before we fought"

film. Tolkien is such a great writer. He builds you to this point where you think the climax of his story is going to be around a particular event. He dispatches it very quickly, and then there's the rest of the book to deal with! So that's what happens. The great thing about the third film is that Peter's able to take that little thing that Tolkien did and play with it. I think that the final third of this third film, which is a battle narrative, is not *just* a fight, it's a complete story of its own.

Was there a lot of preparation for the final battle, training to fight with swords and axes?

► It was one of the things about splitting the film into three that we were prepared for the final battle about a year before we got to actually fight! That was the most difficult side of it, keeping up the stamina that it was going to take for the final battle. No one knew what the battle was going to be like, how long it was going to be, until we actually started shooting it. So it was like an unknown quantity. But I'm now happy to say I don't think there's a single move that I shot that hasn't been used. Peter's used every single move that I did.

How did you find his directing style?

► Peter pushes the takes so that what he gets out of you ultimately is a kind of exhaustion. Particularly at this point of the journey, and particularly with regards to the beats of the battle. He's not looking for superheroes; he's looking for really gritty warriors. What it feels like to be on a battlefield at the end of your tether and exhausted. He certainly pushed me to that point, so there was a real fight for survival at the end for the character.

Were you a fan of Tolkien's work before you started?

► Yes, I read the *Rings* book a few times when I was a kid. *The Hobbit* was probably my first introduction to fantasy, at school. It was one of those books that I read alone for the first time without someone forcing me to read. So a lot of my imagination I think was formed through these books. It's a story I know I'll go back to and read again at some point in my life.

So being part of it hasn't put you off it?

► Quite the opposite. Peter's moved on and taken the book with him, but he's opened up the ideas of the world that Tolkien was never quite doing in the book. In a way, what Tolkien did was he went on to write *Lord Of The Rings* because of *The Hobbit*. I think he felt unfulfilled with *The Hobbit* and he wanted more and he wanted to expand on that idea. Peter has kept that river flowing in the same direction.

How did you feel on the last day of filming?

► I remember the very last moment, when he called wrap. It was *very* emotional. Physically, I was sort of broken. Emotionally, it was a really great moment. [Writers] Philippa Boyens and Fran Walsh were there and they watched the last shot and came up and gave me a hug – because I think they knew how much it had cost! **SFX**



The Hobbit: The Battle Of The Five Armies will be released on Friday 12 December.





WARNER BROS LAUNCHES ITS BIG
SCREEN COUNTERSTRIKE TO MARVEL.
SAXON BULLOCK HAS THE DETAILS...

BUILDING THE DC MOVIE UNIVERSE

THE WAITING IS OVER – Warner Bros and DC Entertainment have unveiled their superhero movie plans, and the resulting five-year production slate is both highly ambitious... and highly risky. With almost twice the movies that Marvel pulled off in Phase One, this is Warner going all out to construct a cinematic DCU, finally delivering a big screen line-up that uses their biggest and brightest heroes. Whether any of these upcoming franchises will let Warner beat Marvel at its own game remains to be seen, but one thing's for sure: when 2020 arrives, nobody will be complaining about a lack of superhero blockbusters in their lives.

BATMAN V SUPERMAN: DAWN OF JUSTICE

DIRECTOR: ZACK SNYDER

THE PITCH: The follow-up to 2013's *Man Of Steel*, *BvS* will pitch the last son of Krypton against an older, more seasoned Dark Knight, while also introducing Wonder Woman. And Lex Luthor. And Aquaman. And Cyborg. And possibly some other DC icons...

THE PROMISE: From the first press release, Warner has set fan hearts a-quiver by promising the film will strongly reference the Batman/Superman conflict in Frank Miller's *The Dark Knight Returns*. With its doomy official images, *DKR*-inspired Comic-Con teaser trailer and rumours that Jena Malone may play a Miller-style female Robin, it's already giving every impression of matching *Man Of Steel*'s relentlessly bleak tone. How it'll also pull off being an overcrowded Justice League prelude is anyone's guess, especially as the entire Warner slate depends on everybody loving *BvS* as much as *The Avengers*. No pressure, Zack Snyder, no pressure at all... ➔

RELEASE DATE
25 MAR
2016

SUICIDE SQUAD

RELEASE DATE
5 AUG
2016

DIRECTOR: DAVID AYER

THE PITCH: A group of lethal super-criminals are forced into working for the US government, tackling situations too dangerous for anyone else...

THE PROMISE: There's potential here for a slick, fun ensemble actioner in the spirit of recent *Fast And The Furious* movies, which could also inject some much-needed dark humour into the currently stony-faced DCU. The Squad's high body-count means Warner can aim for big names without the necessity of lengthy multi-film deals, and stars like Ryan Gosling, Will Smith and Tom Hardy are already being rumoured for black ops action, alongside rumblings that Jesse Eisenberg's Lex Luthor may follow up his *BvS* debut with an appearance here. David Ayer is a filmmaker who'll bring plenty of grit and edge but his style isn't that different from Snyder's steely sensibility. This one will sink or swim on the strength of its cast...

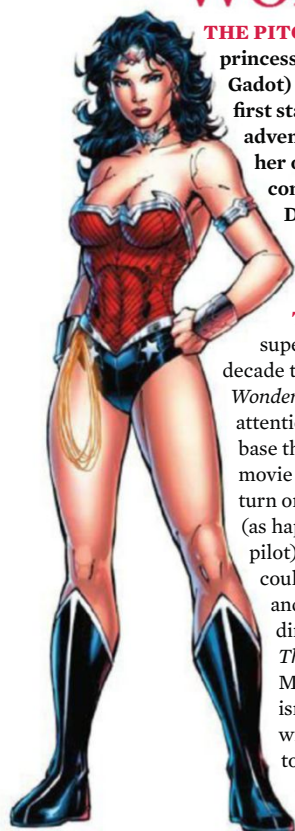
SUICIDE SQUAD

WONDER WOMAN

THE PITCH: Amazonian princess Diana (Gal Gadot) gets her first standalone adventure, and with her onscreen origin confirmed as matching DC's New 52 version (where she's the daughter of Zeus), expect major mythological mayhem galore.

THE PROMISE: The first superhero blockbuster for over a decade to focus on a female character, *Wonder Woman* will attract massive attention. There's a passionate fan-base that's been waiting for a WW movie for years, but they could easily turn on the film if it's not up to snuff (as happened with 2011's abortive TV pilot). Recent rumours suggest this could be a 1920s-set origin story, and Warner has locked in a female director in the shape of *Game Of Thrones/Breaking Bad* veteran Michelle MacLaren. But her work isn't everything: it'll take a talented writing team for *Wonder Woman* to truly shine, and not just end up as "Generic Warrior Vixen: The Movie"...

RELEASE DATE
23 JUNE
2017



JUSTICE LEAGUE: PART ONE

DIRECTOR: ZACK SNYDER

THE PITCH: The biggest team of DC heroes assemble for an epic that will see the League tackle a potentially world-shattering threat.

THE PROMISE: Whatever happens with *BvS*, the long-awaited *Justice League* film is going to be huge – so even if Warner Bros is worried about *Wonder Woman*'s box office performance, 2017 will still delight the shareholders. Rumours suggest the League will be fighting either classic villains Darkseid or Brainiac – neither of which have been brought to the big screen before – while the *Part One* subtitle declares we're looking at a story that's just too damn big for a single film. However, *Justice League* will also have to juggle a massive mix of characters and tones, in a setting where genuine Greek gods co-exist with Batman. Joss Whedon may have made that kind of thing look easy in *The Avengers*, but Snyder will have to up his game considerably to match him...

RELEASE DATE
17 NOV
2017

THE FLASH

THE PITCH: Super-speedster Barry Allen (Ezra Miller) is the hero who protects Central City from crime in his secret identity as the Flash.

THE PROMISE: Anyone watching the current *Flash* TV show will know that this has the potential to match the vibrant, emotive fun of a Marvel film, and the super-speed effects will look even better on a blockbuster budget. Star Ezra Miller will likely be making his debut in 2017's *Justice League*, so it isn't clear yet exactly how this standalone adventure will fit in with DC's overall superhero saga. At the very least, *The Flash* is too colourful and goofy to go the gritty-and-serious route, and is the closest thing on the DC slate to an accessible all-round crowd-pleaser – but 2011's bland *Green Lantern* misfire looked equally promising. A director and writer for this one will need to be chosen with care...

RELEASE DATE
23 MAR
2018



AQUAMAN

THE PITCH: Arthur Curry (Jason Momoa) is the long-lost king of Atlantis, and uses his water-powers to protect the undersea world from danger.

THE PROMISE: Any *Game Of Thrones* viewer knows that Momoa is carved from solid muscle and raw charisma, and Aquaman's underwater world gives plenty of potential for a visual feast. Current rumours suggest there'll be appearances from characters like love-interest Mera, along with villains Black Manta and Ocean Master. However, much of Aquaman's long comics history is convoluted and borderline ludicrous – and outside the comics world the character is often seen as something of a joke. The admittedly successful New 52 relaunch hasn't changed this too much, and Momoa's *League*-related appearances will have to seriously impress if the *Aquaman* movie isn't to be greeted by perplexed shrugs...

RELEASE DATE
27 JULY
2018

SHAZAM!

THE PITCH: Billy Batson is a young boy gifted with powers of wizardry, and when he shouts "Shazam!" he transforms into a mighty adult superhero...

THE PROMISE: A super-powered version of the Tom Hanks classic *Big*, *Shazam* is a long-running character who actually outsold Superman during the 1940s. Nicknamed The Big Red Cheese, he'd possibly play better as an all-ages CGI animation than in the same universe as *Man Of Steel*. There have been hints this could be a lighter film that wouldn't directly tie to the DCU – Dwayne Johnson's announcement that he'd be playing *Shazam*'s main adversary Black Adam suggested production would happen soon – but the belated 2019 release date may indicate second thoughts. Could Warner now be looking to the "edgier" New 52 version of *Shazam*?

RELEASE DATE
5 APR
2019

JUSTICE LEAGUE: PART TWO

DIRECTOR: ZACK SNYDER

THE PITCH: The superhero ensemble saga begun in *Justice League: Part One* reaches its titanic climax.

THE PROMISE: One of the big questions about the now two-part *Justice League* movie is what comic storylines will be mined for cinematic inspiration. There's no

shortage of epic showdowns in the League's 54 year history, and the Darkseid rumours suggest the filmmakers are looking to the Geoff Johns run that kicked off the New 52.

However, if they really want an epic that could give Marvel a run for its money, they'll look to Grant Morrison's mind-bending 1990s *JLA* run, a set of rousing adventures that show how creative and imaginative superhero stories can be.

RELEASE DATE
14 JUNE
2019

CYBORG

THE PITCH: Injured in a horrific accident, Victor Stone (Ray Fisher) is given amazing powers when half of his body is replaced with cybernetic technology...

THE PROMISE: The first black superhero movie to be announced (narrowly beating Marvel's *Black Panther*), a *Cyborg* film was the big surprise on the Warner slate, even shocking star Ray Fisher (who only discovered he was getting his own blockbuster a few days prior to the announcement). *Cyborg* has been a DC regular since 1982, usually as a Teen Titans member, and was promoted to the *Justice League* in 2011's New 52 reboot. This standalone movie will follow Fisher's appearances in *BvS* and the *Justice League*, but with *Cyborg* never having had his own ongoing title, there's not many stories waiting to be adapted. Outside the DC connections, "He's half-man, half-robot!" is hardly the most thrilling pitch...

RELEASE DATE
3 APR
2020

GREEN LANTERN

THE PITCH: Test pilot Hal Jordan expands his horizons when he joins the intergalactic justice force known as the Green Lantern Corps...

THE PROMISE: Warner Bros will be praying to every available god that nine years will have been enough time for everyone to have forgotten about the failure of 2011's *Green Lantern* and to give this reboot a chance. There'll be opportunities to seed Lantern Corps mythology in the *Justice League* movies while the new *Green Lantern* could make his proper debut here. Correcting some of the 2011 movie's missteps won't be hard, but there's still the fact that certain aspects of *Green Lantern*'s rainbow-coloured literalism may play easier in comics than in movies. A looser adaptation that injects some *Guardians Of The Galaxy*-style energy and irreverence might be exactly what this reboot needs... **SFX**

RELEASE DATE
19 JUNE
2020

NEXT MONTH: We give the lowdown on Marvel's packed Phase Three slate.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY LINDA STEELE

COSMIC DANCER

As one of the true greats of SF literature turns 75, Jonathan Wright talks to **MICHAEL MOORCOCK** about worlds old and new...

HALLUCINATIONS, AT least when not induced by drugs, are usually taken to be frightening symbols of a troubled mind or body. But what happens if, instead of being scared, you accept hallucinations as part of how you see the world. Might this not be the sanest response? If anyone should know, it's novelist Michael Moorcock.

"From a very early age I would see visions all the time, I still do," he says as if this is the most natural thing in the world to be chatting about 20 minutes or so into an interview when a journalist comes visiting at his Paris apartment. "Nothing to do with drugs or anything else. In the '60s, I was regarded as being the great drug writer, everybody was convinced I was doing acid to write the books, which I wasn't – not to write the books.

What drugs I was doing I would do as a leisure activity, not in order to work."

He's talking about a childhood when he would see "what people would probably call ghosts, but which I knew was my own imagination imposing itself on the light". These visions took the form of medieval characters, Renaissance characters, even "a complete Jesus with a bleeding heart" at one point. "When I was out walking in Yorkshire, I saw choirs of angels and whole Blakeian visions," he says. "The difference between me and Blake, apart from talent, is that Blake believed what he was seeing was some kind of inspired vision, whereas I knew this was coming from within me somewhere."

If this suggests Michael John Moorcock, who turns 75 this month, has an unusual worldview, this shouldn't perhaps be too

surprising. We are, after all, talking about a man whose work as a novelist and also an editor, especially through his time at the helm of *New Worlds*, the house magazine of the 1960s SF New Wave, has helped to define how we see the modern world in all its terrible, ragged, contradictory glory.

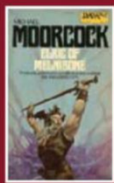
To achieve this, he had to learn to channel his imagination. "I can't have it all coming through at the same time or I'd be crazy," he says. "I think my mother, who was fairly nuts, a very nice woman, a very loving woman, but she was barmy as a fruitcake, she had quite a lot of that in her, but without the vocabulary to control it and explain it – she was just scared of stuff that happened to her."

She was also, he says, "psychic" in other ways. She was able, for instance, to choose winners on the horses, yet didn't like sharing ➔



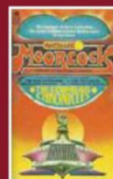
THREE KEY MOORCOCK BOOKS

New to Moorcock? Here are three books to begin with...



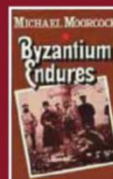
THE FANTASY ONE ELRIC OF MELNIBONÉ AND OTHER STORIES

The best place to start is with Gollancz's definitive editions of the saga of Elric, a character who's one of the key manifestations of the idea of the Eternal Champion, a hero who exists across time and dimensions within the Multiverse. More prosaically, Elric is also an albino prince who wields a soul-drinking sword.



THE HIPSTER ONE THE CORNELIUS QUARTET

Secret agent, counterculture face and adventurer Jerry Cornelius is another recurring Moorcock character who appears to be an aspect of the Eternal Champion. This volume gathers up four novels, including *The Condition Of Muzak*, which won the 1977 *Guardian* Fiction Prize.



THE LITERARY ONE BYZANTIUM ENDURES

Maxim Arturovitch Pyatnitski is an antisemite, a thug, a fascist and, most definitely, an unreliable narrator. As the central character in the Pyat Quartet, he also enables Moorcock to show us the horrors of the 20th century. Moorcock wrote *Mother London* in part to take a break from Pyat.

her insights because it might bring bad luck. "It meant oddly enough I grew up very sceptical of anything mystical or any kind of religious imagery and stuff like that," says Moorcock. "I have very little in the way of mystical beliefs or anything like that, I never did have either."

What he did have from an early age was an appreciation of pulp fiction. Having started out doing fanzines, Moorcock became editor of *Tarzan Adventures* aged just 17. And forget William Blake, it was *The Sexton Blake Library* that gave Moorcock his second pro gig. These early experiences taught him to work fast and, especially through his comics work, taught him story structure too. "On *Sexton Blake*, we were very contemptuous of poorly constructed things like James Bond," he says. "We would never allow a *deus ex machina* of any kind, it just wasn't allowed in our fiction."

By the 1960s, still in his early 20s, Moorcock was writing longer fiction. Famously, he would dash off fantasy novels in just three days, in part because it was all the time he could spare if he was to make the same day rate as he did from writing comics. Nevertheless, even if the money wasn't as good, it was a conscious decision to make a change. Too many comics writers, Moorcock saw, became "embittered" by the work. Also, he adds, it's easy to "get exhausted" writing comics. By contrast, with novels, "You get feedback, it works for you."

This feedback, you'd guess, remains important to Moorcock. He's affable,

"I WOULD SEE VISIONS ALL THE TIME"

charming, if maddeningly difficult to pin down on things like specific times and places to meet up. He's dapper and has an actor's ability to command attention, yet never comes across as affected. If a Ballardian world is austere, alienating, lonely, a Moorcockian world is about connections, a place of chance encounters and conversation. This in itself probably made him ideal for *New Worlds*, a title he took over in 1964, despite his in many respects not having any real interest in SF. Rather, what Moorcock saw was an opportunity "to use science fiction" to do something new, "to borrow tropes from science fiction that were useful in writing a kind of fiction – if you like a literary fiction, but it was a popular literary fiction".

Of the fellow travellers in this adventure – among them Brian Aldiss, M John Harrison and the pop artist (later Sir) Eduardo Paolozzi – Moorcock says it was JG Ballard who was

his most important cohort. "We were the two who drove that whole agenda," he says. "Other people weren't so interested but they had to go along if they wanted to be in *New Worlds*."

As this agenda gave us Moorcock's hipster secret agent Jerry Cornelius and many of the stories in Ballard's *Atrocity Exhibition* as it reengineered literary SF, the importance of *New Worlds* can hardly be overstated. The magazine fed off the counter-culture too, so that Moorcock's Ladbroke Grove flat became a centre to meet and talk – "rock'n'roll people, painters and writers, it was normal".

But such scenes never last. By the 1970s, change was in the air. "I felt any battles we'd fought around *New Worlds* had been won or lost and were over," Moorcock says. "There wasn't any point in fighting those battles anymore. I felt we'd achieved what we were going to achieve and the magazine was no longer needed." Moorcock and Ballard, "a sort of Lenin and Trotsky of the revolution", had "begun to diverge". Change was evident in London too as Ladbroke Grove gentrified, represented by a new lawyer neighbour forming a committee to oversee the communal garden in the square where Moorcock lived.

"That's when I started shooting at his dinner parties," he says with some satisfaction, "which nobody ever knew [Mike's wife Linda, laconically: "They'll know now..."] because I was able to bounce the shots off their enamelled stove and bounce it into their dining room when they were having dinner

Michael Moorcock enjoys the autumn sunshine, November 2014.



parties. They always thought the shots were coming from somewhere else and they'd start running out into the garden to look for these people doing all this stuff. 'Michael, have you seen anything, somebody is shooting at us!' 'Oh no, squire, I haven't seen them.'

A London Moorcock loved was passing into memory, although not before he had written a paean to the capital and perhaps his own mother too, the Whitbread-nominated *Mother London* (1988), an extraordinary, deliberately fragmented book which follows the lives of three outpatients at a mental hospital from the Blitz to the era of high Thatcherism.

"They've killed the centre by doing exactly what Thatcher said things had to do," says Moorcock. "Places had to earn their own keep, which means all the secrets of London, all of the little places where I used to go for quietness, where I used to go to think about the past or whatever, they've become *consumerised*."

Partly as a result, and partly because Linda was too often at the receiving end of anti-American comments – "She'd got a lot of crap from snotty-nosed Londoners. If I hadn't been with her when this happened I'd have thought she was a raving paranoid" – Moorcock now divides his time between Paris and the USA.

"I wanted to move to Texas so I could live somewhere there was no British enclave, so I would have to live by whatever rules there are," he says, "so that I would understand American thought better because we are

constantly baffled by Americans for not being Europeans. We wonder, 'They've got all this, they do all that, why aren't they socialists?'" One answer, he says, is because "constitutionally they're anarchists, and certainly many Texans are anarchists, they believe in total freedom of the individual".

Nevertheless, with the Tea Party on the rise, he's ready to return to Europe full-time. He should be feted as a returning hero, but that overlooks the way he's still regarded in some quarters. For all that his literary fiction has grappled with such big themes as, in the Pyat novels, the Holocaust, the fact that he also writes epic fantasy confuses people, he says.

"It frustrates them, they know there's all this trash out there," says Moorcock. "They say, 'Why does he do it?' They very rarely say it to my face, but you know that's what they're thinking and often writing. It irritates people. They think, 'If he's capable of doing *Mother London* or the Pyat books, then why doesn't he keep going?'"

Well, why do you do it then, Mike? "I do it because I can and I want to,"

he replies without hesitation. "I like writing fantasy – science fantasy really is the best term for it, and I really get a kick out of doing it." **SFX**

For more on Michael Moorcock, visit www.multiverse.org.

THE RETURN OF THE KING



As *SFX* was going to press, long hinted-at news of a new novel from Michael Moorcock finally solidified into something definite. *The Whispering Swarm: Book One Of The Sanctuary Of The White Friars* is the first offering in a trilogy. While there's no news on when the book will hit UK stores, Tor in the USA will publish the novel on 13 January 2015.

"I'm not sure if I really should be working on trilogies at my age," Moorcock has said, "but this one is essentially an autobiographical novel with a very heavy fantasy element."

At the centre of the trilogy lies Alsatia, an area of London between the Thames and Fleet Street, and which in this part of the multiverse was a place of sanctuary until Parliament decreed otherwise in 1697. In the book, a young man's arrival in Alsatia, as the blurb has it, "sends a shockwave of chaos through time".

DEATH BECO

AS HAMMER SUMMONS A SEQUEL TO THE
WOMAN IN BLACK, STEPHEN KELLY DISCOVERS
ANGEL OF DEATH IS NO MERE CASH-IN...

ON SET
ACCESS!

THE WALLS OF EEL MARSH HOUSE are thick with decay, its woodwork rotting, its surfaces black with dead flies. Even as a Pinewood film set, it's clear that death defines this place, that bad things happen here. This will come as no surprise to anyone who saw *The Woman In Black* haunt its halls in 2012, the hit adaptation of Susan Hill's renowned novella in which a mysterious spectre drives children to their suicide. Fans will know, of course, that Hill wrapped up her original story back in 1983, but the reason why *SFX* stands here today is that on film the woman in black is back for sequel *Angel Of Death* – although, you'll be glad to hear, not without Hill's input.

Adapted by Jane Goldman (*Kick Ass*, *X Men: First Class*) and directed by James Watkins, *The Woman In Black* was a big deal

for not only Hammer Films, the legendary production company that had rebirthed five years previously, but British film in general, with it becoming the highest grossing Brit horror in 20 years.

That, no doubt, was a feat helped by it starring Daniel Radcliffe (in his first role post-*Harry Potter*) as Arthur Kipps, a widowed lawyer whose task of arranging the sale of Eel Marsh House sees him caught up with the ghost of a woman grieving for her son – and who, in turn, exacts revenge on a child every time she is seen. Even so, it's unfair to say that *The Woman In Black* became a success through star power alone. As a horror, it was informed by shadow and space, of creeping dread and traditional shivers – the sort that felt refreshing after years of torture porn and found footage. Fitting, really, considering ➔

MESHER



THE WOMAN IN BLACK 2

that Hill originally wrote the story as both a yearning for the subtleties of authors such as MR James, and as a reaction to '80s American horror fiction that had become dominated by monsters and gore.

Hill herself, now 72, is the foundation on which *Angel Of Death* is built, as the new film was written from her original story outline. "Having Susan underpin it by giving her name to the story was pivotal," explains Simon Oakes, who took over as CEO of Hammer Films in 2007. "I approached her before the first film came out, and asked if she had ever thought about writing another story on *The Woman In Black*. She said she had thought about it but had always dismissed it. As a novelist, she didn't want to create a long-running saga.

"But then she got inspired while she was writing something else in Norfolk and saw these abandoned World War II air bases. She thought about Eel Marsh House being requisitioned as a school or a hospital when the Blitz was at its height and the decision was taken to evacuate children to houses in the countryside and then she began to roll with it. It's terrific to have her as part of this. It gives it a legitimacy."

WARTIME WOES

From the bones of Hill's idea, Hammer Films invited writers such as Jon Coker, a story editor on the first film, to pitch how they would flesh it out.

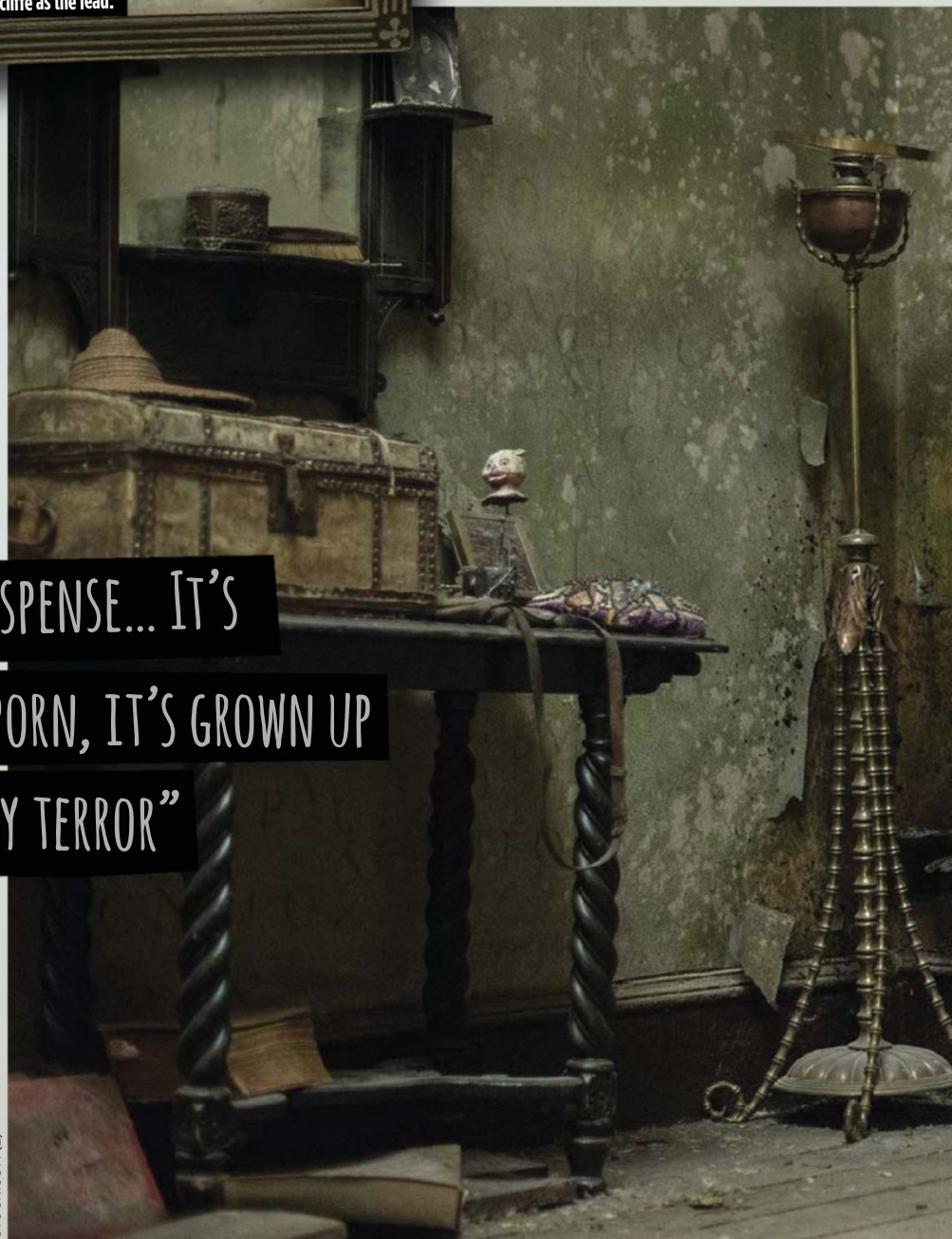
"The outline was only a couple of pages long," explains Coker, "and I had to pitch how I would expand that, this core idea of World War II and old houses that were being requisitioned by the government for various uses, and continue it. I came up with



Phoebe Fox takes over from Daniel Radcliffe as the lead.

a causeway from the mainland. One by one, the children begin to act strangely – especially the recently orphaned Edward, who seems to have struck up a sinister friendship with the ghost upstairs. Eve, with the help of local military commander Harry (Jeremy Irvine), discovers that the group has awoken a force even more terrifying than London's air raids.

"Susan's idea of setting it in World War II and bringing the children more into the fore immediately brought in new things," says Coker. "There's that dark underside of the Blitz spirit, for example. I also wanted to make the children proper characters, whereas in the first film they are in the background, dying, and you don't get to know any of them. I thought, 'let's bring them front and centre.'"



ISTOCK.COM (2)

"SUGGESTED FEAR, DREAD, SUSPENSE... IT'S NOT ABOUT MAKING TORTURE PORN, IT'S GROWN UP STORYTELLING PUNCTUATED BY TERROR"

the idea of Eve. On a very simple level, the first film had a male hero, so I wanted to give the second film a female hero to make it different. Also, *The Woman In Black* has these themes of motherhood, and I thought it would be interesting to see that from a female perspective."

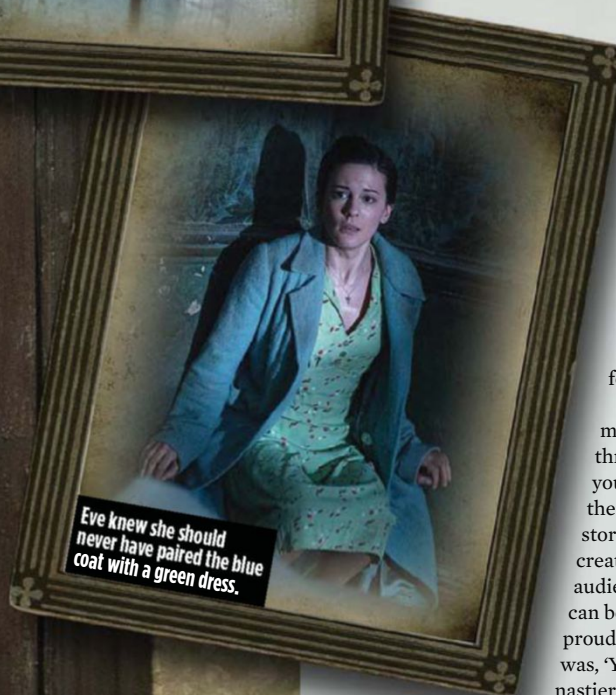
Eve Parkins, played by Phoebe Fox, is a young school teacher who, along with Helen McCrory's headteacher Jean Hogg, is tasked with evacuating a group of children out of London during the Blitz. They are, of course, taken to that old, empty and dilapidated estate called Eel Marsh House, cut-off off by

That would be interesting but possibly makes it much more disturbing as you get to know these children before they're brutally offed by an evil ghost.

"Another thing that felt attractive to me was that we avoid the biggest problem with horror sequels, which is 'Why go back?' Even in the greatest horror sequel of all time, *Aliens*, you still go, 'Really, would you?' So at least it wasn't that, because this is set decades after the first film and has a new set of characters to explore the *Woman In Black* character through, who I feel there was much more to get out of."

SECOND BEST?

There is, of course, a question that hangs over *Angel In Death* like a chill: is a *Woman*



In Black sequel really necessary? After all, horror sequels hardly have form for being brilliant and surely the combination of a new, relatively unknown cast, a new writer and, in Tom Harper (*Peaky Blinders*, *Misfits*), a new director is bound to ring the cash-in bells for any cynical horror fan?

"There aren't many second horror films that are that good," admits Croker, "and that's always a bit of pressure. Tom [Harper] and I, though, have gone through the script and said, 'Okay, is there anything in this that seems like a repeat from the first one? If there is, is there any way to put a twist on that or make it feel like an embellishment? Or is there anything we do want to go back to the first one and nod to, but then move on?'"

"Our ambition has to be for it to be as good if not better than the first, and also different," agrees Oakes. "The new creative team have set the bar very high. There's freshness,

fearlessness, a point to prove. We've been very fortunate. Jon's terrifically brave and fearless and has a real clear idea on what he wants to do. Obviously moving to another period instead of moving from the last frame of the first movie means there's a completely new canvas. It's totally its own animal."

And what does that mean for its scares?

"We tried to create a mood of fear all the way through," says Croker. "And if you sustain that level of fear, then you can tell an interesting story. Also, if you manage to create a sense of unease in the audience, the simplest things can be the best scares. I am very proud of some of the ideas here. It was, 'Yeah, can we make this any nastier?' 'What if there's barbed wire?' then you think, 'Oh my word, what are we doing?' But it's all very tastefully done, hopefully."

Indeed. In 2012, *The Woman In Black* was deemed "too scary" by the British Board of Film Classification, who originally gave the film a 15 rating despite it being PG-13 in America. And even when tweaks were made for a 12A certificate, audience complaints inspired the BBFC to amend their guidelines to take into account a film's tone and theme. Has that influenced just how far *Angel Of Death* can go?

"It was a 12A but look, we respect that decision," says Oakes. "But if kids are playing *Grand Theft Auto*, they should be able to watch horror. But it's less about severed limbs with us, it's more suggested fear, dread, suspense – and that's a psychological impact on young minds that you have to be careful of. It's not about making torture porn. It's grown up storytelling punctuated by terror." ▶



ALL ABOUT EVE

Phoebe Fox talks scares and sequel pressure...

How does it feel taking over the lead in *Angel Of Death*? Any pressure?

▀ Absolutely. It's a weight on my shoulders, with the success of the first film which was led by Daniel Radcliffe. I really enjoyed the first film, I thought it was amazing and incredibly, incredibly scary. But hopefully I'm up to the challenge.

Tell us about Eve...

▀ She's kind of a mother figure. Helen McCrory's character, Jean, is the archetypal teacher of the 1940s. Eve is a more modern take on a teacher, more tactile and softer. Although she does have her own demons, and it's that and the safety of the children that's the driving force behind her putting herself in danger. Because there's always that thing in horror of, "Why? Why are you going into the cellar with one lamp!"

Is it scary filming a scary film?

▀ I think I've been the most scared on this set. [Director] Tom Harper's taken to just scaring me in rehearsals by jumping out at me. Yeah, some of it is scary, definitely. They're filming it as dimly lit as they can, so sometimes it can be quite dark. When we did the first few days and we were in this rotting manor house, I had to go down into the cellar with just this one lamp, and that was the only lighting. I was scared. It felt like it was real.

And how is it to film with children?

▀ It's a learning curve! Tom's always telling them off for asking pointless questions like, "Shall I say my line again in this take?" And Tom's like, "Well, yes, you should always say your line in every take." They're really lovely, though, and they're really good actors as well which is slightly unsettling. **SFX**

Stephen Kelly

The Woman In Black: Angel Of Death is released on Thursday 1 January.

PHOTO BY ALEX BRAWALL @ ELLISON LEE. STYLING BY JULIA BRENARD. MAKE UP BY CHARLOTTE COWEN. HAIR BY STEPHEN BEAVER @ JED ROOT

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BACK IN BLACK

ON SET
ACCESS!

CHARLIE BROOKER'S DREAMING OF A DARK CHRISTMAS... STEPHEN KELLY ENTERS THE TWISTED REALM OF BLACK MIRROR

OF COURSE THERE'S TINSEL," grins Charlie Brooker, gesturing to a portion of it hanging above a door. "It's Christmas!" The bit of tinsel in question is a sad looking thing, a golden strand that decorates the wall of a wood cabin – the sort that you'd associate with desolation, of post-apocalyptic survival, rather than chestnuts roasting on an open fire.

Dotted around are attempts at festive cheer: a dying Christmas tree, a half-eaten turkey dinner, Santa grinning out from a garish Toby Jug. All blackly funny against the bleak backdrop, all typical of what you might expect from a *Black Mirror* Christmas special.

For those not acquainted with the twisted world of *Black Mirror*, it's the dystopian anthology series of Charlie Brooker – *Guardian* columnist, swearsy presenter of *Screenwipe*

and writer of 2008's *Big Brother* zombie satire *Dead Set* – that grimly ponders where the not-so-distant-future of technology is taking us. From 2011's first episode "The National Anthem", in which the Prime Minister of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is forced to have sex with a pig on live television, it cut a figure like no other. It was dark, it was challenging, it was sci-fi with a point to prove: that if the drug of modern technology has us hooked, then there must be side effects.

"One of our models was the original *Twilight Zone*," explains Brooker, on set today at Twickenham Studios. "It came out at a time of change and uncertainty and I wanted to do something similar for what's affecting us now: technology. I kind of felt like this wasn't being studied in other drama serials. It felt like an untapped resource for creepy, dark 'what if?' stories." ➔



Over the course of two series, those stories have varied in topic, theme and tone. Its opening three episodes, each an hour long, established the show's ambition, "The National Anthem" tackling voyeurism and news in the Twitter age; "15 Million Merits", co-written with Brooker's wife Konnie Huq, envisioning a terrifying future of reality TV and Jesse Armstrong's "The Entire History Of You", which took the huge science fiction concept of a world able to record and play back memories and condensed it down to one paranoid, crumbling relationship. Series two, meanwhile, fully hit its stride with the thought-provoking "Be Right Back", in which a widow clones her dead husband and has his personality extrapolated from his social media presence. Then there was the harrowing "White Bear", whose twist revealed a right-wing nightmare; and "The Waldo Moment", in which a swearsy cartoon dog enters politics.

"The stories are more about the consequences rather than technology itself," says Brooker. "The way we just spend a lot of our time, the way we communicate with other people, that's changed massively in a short period of time and it keeps shifting again and again. We've not really had time to think through the consequences of it all. In fact, the biggest challenge is coming up with the fictional version of some nightmare future before it unfolds. Certainly with the first two seasons, things that we've put in there have sort of happened, like a website [liveson.org] that would curate your tweets and assemble a version of you after you die. It's terrifying."

CRACKING THE STORY

By its cast alone, the Yuletide special, which is titled "White Christmas", has shown how powerful *Black Mirror* has become, landing the likes of *Game of Thrones*' Oona Chaplin, Edgar

Wright fave Rafe Spall and

Don Draper himself, *Mad Men*'s Jon Hamm.

"I heard he was a big fan of the show," says Brooker. "Then he was in London and his agent got in touch with us, saying 'Jon wants to meet up as he's a fan.' So we met with him for a meal and it was just a social occasion. And then I went off and then I was like, 'Hang on a minute. He says he's a big fan of the show...' I was writing the script at the time, and the character [that Jon Hamm would play] was quite different. Originally he was going to be this cheeky cockney guy and I thought, 'Something about that is a bit weird anyway,' and then you think, 'Hang on a minute, if I change this and this, would he? No... surely not.' Then I thought, 'If you don't ask, you don't get.' He got back really quickly."

The special takes the form of a feature-length hour and a half long episode, which centres around Hamm's Matt and Spall's Potter swapping stories of life before they ended up at this snowy, remote cabin.

"The structure of it is three interweaving stories that are being told by Jon and Rafe's characters. Matt is the chattier of the two, while Potter has been extremely taciturn up until that point. And because it's Christmas Day, Matt is making Christmas lunch to try and break the ice. And breaking the ice takes the form of, initially, Matt telling stories of his own life. So, he starts explaining what went wrong for them to have ended up there, as they do a real shitty job."

Unlike what we've seen of *Black Mirror* so far, this will be the first time that the show's different tales will be told in the same continuity.

"The stories are shorter, but they're all in one and there's an over-arching story that connects the whole thing together. So it's longer and shorter, if you see what I mean. You're getting a sort of compilation. If the

"THINGS THAT WE PUT IN THE FIRST TWO SEASONS HAVE SINCE HAPPENED"



Eggnog always strikes twice.



inspiration for *Black Mirror* was *The Twilight Zone*, for this it's a hybrid of compendium films like [Ealing's 1945] *Dead Of Night*, or the Amicus horror films of the '70s, like Robert Powell visiting the lunatic asylum in *Asylum*. It's like a short story collection."

SECRETS AND LIES

The three stories themselves are shrouded in mystery, with Brooker reluctant to go into detail on concepts and plot. One he is quite open about, though, focuses on the idea of being able to block people – as you would do on Twitter – in real life.

"You use this particular type of technology where everyone has this computeristic vision," he explains, "so if I was to block you, you'd be a silhouette to me, and I'd be a silhouette to you, and you'd be anonymised. I wouldn't be able to hear you either, so you wouldn't be able to communicate with me, and vice versa.



"Listen, Egg. I like you, you like me, but this isn't going to work."

So it's that notion of blocking people on social media, if you could do that in reality.

"I remember yonks ago having an idea on what would happen if people had magic goggles to airbrush out the homeless. That was years ago. Then you see Google Glass coming along, and you think, 'Hang on a minute, we're not far away from that sort of thing happening.' So, that's an interesting question in itself: if people could do that, clean up the world by pushing a button by their eyes, would they bother fixing real social problems? If they didn't have to step over someone on the way to the cashpoint because they couldn't see or hear them, would they still care?"

The other two stories, however, are being kept vague at best. "There's another story where Jon's character is advising in an unusual form of romantic guidance to a naive young man. So he's offering romantic guidance. It's like coaching, mentoring. That has a technological aspect to it. And the other story...

I can't explain what it's really about without blowing the whole premise. Let's say... you see a woman going in for an operation. What if you had an operation in *Black Mirror*? Let's put it that way. It's really, really hard to explain the story without screwing them up. Channel 4 have asked for some clips for a promo and we were going, 'What the fuck can we actually give them?' When you see it then hopefully you'll know what I mean."

One thing's for sure, though: the *Black Mirror* Christmas special, festive though it is, is certainly still *Black Mirror*. Is there something Brooker finds particularly dark about the holiday season?

"Have you seen *EastEnders*? I mean we're not that fucking dark. That's pretty much, you know, people tossing kittens into furnaces on Christmas Day..." **SFX**

Black Mirror airs on Channel 4 on 6 December.

HERE COMES THE MIRROR MAN

Jon Hamm reflects on tech, TV and Twitter



What attracted you to *Black Mirror* in the first place?

► Bill Hader, a friend of mine from *Saturday Night Live*, was an early adopter of the series and told me about it, and I watched it immediately, in order, in about 36 hours. I was taken with how audacious and original it was. It's unlike anything else on television, certainly in the US. And I think this [episode] carries on that tradition. It's the best script I've read in quite some time, and I got incredibly lucky to be asked to be a part of it.

You've forayed into British TV before with *Young Doctor's Notebook*. Do you feel drawn to this kind of television?

► I've been a fan of British TV since I can remember. I can think back to being a little kid watching PBS, where you could see re-runs of *Monty Python*, *Blackadder*, *Doctor Who*... and it was great. It was identifiable, approachable, but very different. And that has informed what I do in a post *Mad Men*-landscape when there's more opportunity to do things. Because if you just wanna do the same thing over and over again, choosing to be an actor is a curious choice. It's fun to be doing different things and be part of different cultures. I have a blast over here.

***Black Mirror* concerns technology and the internet. What's your own relationship with it?**

► I have no web presence whatsoever. I missed that train, and I don't plan on catching it any time soon. It's a conscious giving up of privacy, which I don't understand. It's weird enough go on stage in front of a camera and say, "This is me". And the weirdest part of it now is that you're expected to post private things on Twitter. I think I'm a generation too late for it, and thank God!

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COUCH POTATO



Left to right: Rich, Jordan, V, Ian and Nick.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JAMES LOOKER

Dragons

As Smaug returns to the big screen, the Couch crew sacrifices itself to some twisted firestarters...

Ah, dragons. Where would we be without fantasy's fine, fire-snorting beasts? Well, probably not lashed to a rock and awaiting instant incineration, that's where. In tribute to the return of gold-stashing fiend Smaug in *The Hobbit: The Battle Of The Five Armies*, SFX has convened its very own dragon's den. Laughing heroically in the face of certain barbecued death, Nick, Rich, Jordan, Ian and workie V are venturing into the domain of the great scaly ones, armed only with pure hearts, swords of truth and cheap sarcasm.



Dragonslayer's big bad dragon, yesterday.

KOBAL (1)

Dungeons And Dragons: "The Night Of No Tomorrow" (1983)



Roll your luckiest twenty sided die! Spend some gold on a new scabbard!

Our dragon hunt commences with a spot of D&D – or at least the '80s kids' show that brought the classic roleplaying game to the screen in fizzy, brightly-coloured cartoon form. Think *Scooby-Doo* with Experience Points.

RICH: I don't know how much this had to do with the game. I don't think there's actually a 12-sided die in this.

JORDAN: I'm thinking of the Weezer song where he mentions his D20.

IAN: I already know I'm going to die of boredom.

The show's title sequence delivers an instant hit of backstory. Six kids ride a wonky theme park ride and a health and safety nightmare

ensues as they're hurled across the dimensions into the realm of the Dungeon Master. Kitted out in medieval cosplay, they fight wolves and fire magic arrows and try to get home to their weeping, traumatised parents.

JORDAN: Is this a summary of the first episode? Why aren't we watching that?

RICH: No, this is what's already happened when the show begins.

IAN: They don't have an establishing episode? That's mental.

JORDAN: How come she's got an invisible cloak? How come he's super strong? How come there isn't a child abduction investigation going on?

IAN: This feels like episode ten. I remember this being on when I got home from school. I'm sure I understood it then. ➔



The world's least efficient rollercoaster.



Five heads are much, much worse than one.

V: Look at what she's wearing. Boots above the thigh are not practical. You lose a lot of mobility.

NICK: I shall rethink my wardrobe at once.

It may not have any 12-sided dice but it does have a five-headed dragon. Behold the fearsome Tiamat, roused from her cave by the irritating bleat of a baby unicorn. "Who dares awaken me?" she demands.

NICK: That was your early morning unicorn...

IAN: They're not mucking about. It's here already.

JORDAN: That's a pretty fine dragon.

IAN: If you're a dragon with five heads it must take ages to floss.

NICK: She doesn't need to floss. She breathes fire.

"How come there isn't a child abduction investigation?"

V: I don't think dental hygiene is high on a dragon's list of priorities.

IAN: Do you think if one head has a headache they all do?

RICH: Just imagine the paracetamol budget for this show.

Not unreasonably, Ian takes against the cute member of the show's line-up.

IAN: I already hate the baby unicorn. It's just like Snarf in *Thundercats*.

RICH: They all have one. Orco in *He-Man*. No-No in *Ulysses 31*.

Always the cute, irritating one.

IAN (QUIETLY): I quite liked No-No...

Lo, the town of Helix is under dragon attack. It's a plot hatched

by the show's sorcerous, bat-winged villain, Venger – or Venger, Force of Evil, as he insists on telling people at parties.

IAN: Why's he only got one horn? It's really annoying me. I bet if he had two horns he'd be a nice guy. He'd be balanced.

V: Is he overcompensating for lack of horn?

IAN: I bet he hates it if you toss a hoop on it.

Look, it's Merlin! He's stroking a white rabbit.

IAN: He's like a short-sighted Blofeld. He must have picked up the wrong thing in the pet shop. Clearly no one's had the heart to tell him.

Merlin insists that the kids stay behind with him in order to "learn magic".

IAN: Okay, creepy old man alert.

RICH: It was a different time.

NICK: A different reality.

"The answers to all your questions are contained in this book," says the snowy-bearded spell-mutterer.

IAN: Has he just printed out the whole of Wikipedia?

RICH: Wiccapedia...

Dragons are bubbling into life in a cauldron, ready to terrorise some peasants.

IAN: Are these freeze-dried dragons, like Pot Noodles?

NICK: I think they're more like Sea Monkeys.

Venger's evil, dragon-brewing scheme is finally thwarted by the power of crudely animated magic. He tells our toon heroes "I won't defeat you now, but I will defeat you sometime!" It may be the limpest supervillain sign-off in history.

IAN: Did they do a knock-off cartoon called *Tunnels And Trolls* that was even worse than this?

NICK: You're thinking of *Awkward Spaces And Orcs*.



Tiamat: cross, angry, vexed, irate and livid.



Venger was a big hit at goth night.



Yep, HR Pufnstuf is a dragon. Apparently.



There's no cure for pinkeye, kids.

HR Pufnstuf: "The Magic Path" (1969)



Time to enter the wackazoid world of producers Sid and Marty Krofft, the men

behind *The Banana Splits* and all-round pioneers of mental kids' telly. Billowing from the bong fumes of the '60s, *HR Pufnstuf* mixes live action and puppetry like an unwise chemistry experiment.

V: Are we going to be watching anything from after I was born?

NICK: Think of it as archaeology.

IAN: "The Magic Path"? It sounds like a leaflet handed to you at a train station by a crazy-eyed religious person...

JORDAN: I'm guessing nobody gets roasted alive in this.

Munchkin-sized teen hero Jack Wild is shipwrecked on Living Island. Look, there's the mayor, a smiley but sad-eyed yellow dragon by the name of HR Pufnstuf. Yes, Pufnstuf. Note: insert obligatory "Were they all on drugs?" comment here.

JORDAN: Is that supposed to be a dragon?

V: That is not a dragon! It's a rejected Muppet!

IAN: He's an even less convincing mayor than Boris Johnson.

V: His googly eyes don't quite match up! Too disturbing! And why is this dragon wearing go-go dancer boots?

RICH: This is just a guess, but I think Pufnstuf is a man in a suit.

Jack Wild proudly shows us "My pal Freddy, the only talking flute in the world."

IAN: I bet he uses that line on all the girls.

Cut to the lair of Witchiepoo, the show's cackling, broom-riding villainess.

RICH: She's not as scary as the witch in *Chorlton And The Wheelies*.

JORDAN: Or Rita Repulsa from *Power Rangers*.

IAN: She's more Grotbags.

Witchiepoo's scheming with a bunch of tatty hench-monsters named Orson Vulture, Seymour Spider and, magnificently, Stupid Bat. They flap and shamble with all the menace of unloved toys.

IAN: These guys are like rough concept sketches for *Pacific Rim*, at the back-of-the-envelope stage.

Adding to the head-tripping weirdness is the fact that everything on Living Island is, well, alive. Walls, chairs, doors... Eyes! Eyes everywhere!

JORDAN: Why has everything got a face?

IAN: I hope the toilet hasn't got a face. I'd be constipated for weeks.

A talking castle. Creepy trees with glowing yellow peepers. A dancing frog in gold trousers. It's like being injected into the crumbling mind of a burned-out hippy.

RICH: I'd like to see what this looked like written down on paper.

NICK: It was never written down. It was scrapped from Satan's navel.

IAN: Is this the island from *Lost*? It would make sense if we see the Dharma symbol...

"See you next week!" says Jack Wild, cheerily, as puppets jig dementedly. No, kids! Save your minds from this madness!

IAN: *HR Smokin'crack*.



We're not even going to try to explain this.



And the less said about this the better.



He had no rivals in the wispy beard contest.



Ulrich's cutlery storage was highly unusual.

Dragonslayer (1981)



Craving more traditional dragon action after the insanity of *Pufnstuf*,

the Couch crew turn to this early '80s slice of sword 'n' sorcery.

It's the desperately muddy 6th century and the kingdom of Umland is being terrorised by the fire-breathing virgin-botherer known as Vermithrax Pejorative. Tremble at that Scrabble score!

IAN: Vermithrax Pejorative? That sounds like something for dealing with thrush...

NICK: Or a really fiddly bit of grammar wrangling.

Stirring horns sound over an ominous title sequence.

RICH: Is that where Hans Zimmer got the idea?

JORDAN: Yeah, it's the inception of the *Inception* horn.

V: Well, it makes up for the one Venger's missing.

RICH: This is no *Krull*...

JORDAN: Why does no one make shit fantasy films anymore?

NICK: Have you not seen

The Hobbit?

JORDAN: Have YOU seen *The Hobbit*?

NICK: I don't need to see *The Hobbit* to make a grossly unfair joke.

Thesping legend Ralph Richardson is Ulrich of Craggenmoor, last wizard standing. He has Gandalf's powers and Bill Bailey's barber.

IAN: There's a man traumatised by his own haircut.

NICK: I think he may have just watched *HR Pufnstuf*.

V: The beard is at least as funny as the hair. It looks like something you buy in a packet from a fancy dress shop.



Vermithrax is as classic as dragons get.



The ghost of last night's vinaloo emerged.

Dear old Ralph is stabbed by a brutish centurion, keen to test the old goat's sorcerous abilities. It's the longest knifing in cinema.

JORDAN: It's like *Game Of Thrones* in slow-motion...

In town, a young lady is chained to a post, awaiting sacrifice to Vermithrax.

V: Bet she wishes she'd paid more attention in virgin escapology class.

IAN: Wait – the victims are chosen by lottery? What if it's a rollover?

Hold on – it's the King's daughter! The people's princess is dragon-bait! Vermithrax swoops in.

RICH: Awesome! That dragon looked brilliant!

JORDAN: That's so cool! Proof that dragons ARE really exciting! Take that, *Pufnstuf*!

Ralph Richardson returns from the dead, now with an even wispier beard. He tells young apprentice Galen to go forth and slay the dragon, save the princess and all that Saint George jazz.

NICK: Visually this is pretty decent. It's ILM, right?

RICH: Needs a lot more dragon action, though.

Galen crushes a magical amulet with a rock, causing Ralph to blow up, taking out Vermithrax. The old exploding wizard ruse. A classic.

V: Lamest dragonslaying ever!

JORDAN: So all he had to do was destroy an amulet? He doesn't deserve to be called a dragonslayer!

IAN: This film should be called *Trinketsmasher*.

The camera treats us to a close-up of barbecued dragon meat. The Couch crew reaches for napkins.

IAN: Anyone got any onions?

V: And a 55 gallon can of ketchup?



The horse spa trialled its latest treatment.



Falkor: adorable puppy nightmare dragon.

The NeverEnding Story (1984)



Last up, Wolfgang Petersen's adaptation of the classic German kids' book. Hark, is that

the sound of Limahl? Yes, it's the cockatoo-mulleted pop-imp from Kajagoogoo, warbling on about "the mirror of your dreams" as we soar through the clouds. It could only be more '80s if Mr T was breakdancing on the bonnet of KITT.

NICK: I think the song is better remembered than the film.

JORDAN: Nah, the film's still a cult favourite.

V: This song doesn't feel right for a fantasy movie somehow. It's like the remake of *The Great Gatsby* when they start playing Cameo.

In a bookshop, an old man tells a boy "This book is not for you."

NICK: Yes, kid, forget you ever heard the words "the Marquis de Sade"...

The kid shoplifts the forbidden book and takes it to the school attic for a read. His world is rocked as he discovers he's just a cute framing device in a movie. We're now in the realm of Fantasia, where another kid is riding a horse through the Swamp of Sadness.

NICK: We are, in a very real sense, in a swamp of sadness this evening.

Tragedy! The horse sinks!

V: This needs a mental health trigger warning.

IAN: Warning: contains suicidal horse. Harrowing.

Cut to the kid bawling his little eyes out.

IAN: It's like a flashcard to the audience. Time to cry, you heartless bastards!



"Can I please get a moist towelette?"

Enter Falkor, the pinkest, cuddliest dragon you ever did see. Frankly he makes George from *Rainbow* look like Jason Statham leading a borstal riot. Soon boy and dragon are flying through the skies, powered by the tireless flap of fluffy ears.

JORDAN: That puppet's awesome.

RICH: I don't get how this dragon works. How are those ears generating uplift?

V: Sure, it starts off novel, but riding a dragon would be like flying in a plane. Two hours in and you'd be like "This is boring..."

JORDAN: Does it have a built-in oxygen mask?

V: It doesn't even have a seatbelt.

NICK: At least the emergency exits are everywhere.

Breaking news: Fantasia has exploded. We blame a build-up of tweeness at the planet's core. Only someone with hope and imagination can bring it back. The Couch crew's mouldy old snark just won't cut it.

NICK: *The NeverEnding Story*... Has someone just ripped out the last page?

IAN: There's still time for another horse suicide. I'm going to make that film. *One Hundred Horse Suicides*. Black and white. It'll be like Ingmar Bergman.

Wait! It's the horse! It lives! And it's riding through the fields! We have tears! Imagination and hope are back in the room!

IAN: What they don't show you is that it's going to gallop straight off a cliff...

Let's end it there, people. It's beginning to drag on. Oh, please yourselves. **SFX**



Forget the ear physics. What if he falls off?

Ursula K Le Guin

The legendary American author reflects on a truly brilliant career

WORDS BY JONATHAN WRIGHT PORTRAIT BY MARIAN WOOD KOLISCH

Let's begin with the bad news. According to Ursula K Le Guin, she's unlikely to write another novel. "As you get very old, which I am now, there's the energy matter," says the octogenarian down the line from her home in Portland, Oregon. "I don't think I could possibly write a novel now, I just haven't got the stamina."

She speaks so clearly and with such precision this seems hard to believe, but a lack of new novels doesn't mean she's not busy. Not only has Le Guin "spiraled around" back to writing poetry, as she did when younger, but she's been looking anew at her previously published work, working with her agent to see "what's gone out of print that can be brought back into print, what can be collected".

This year, it's work that's led to the UK publication of two collections, collectively entitled *The Unreal And The Real*, which together find Le Guin personally selecting the best of her short fiction. While *What On Earth* focuses on what Le Guin calls her "more mundane" tales, *Outer Space, Inner Lands* is devoted to more fantastical fiction.

"Mostly, I was just trying to get an order of stories where either one led to another, or they at least wouldn't destroy each other by coming subsequently," she says. "Putting poems together and putting stories together is really very difficult." Taken together, they're volumes that show Le Guin's extraordinary range, built up over a long writing life. That said, it's perhaps telling that even some of the more mundane tales are set in a fictional European country, Orsinia, which Le Guin invented in the 1950s.

"I was obviously kind of steering clear of contemporary politics at that point," she says. "I wasn't ready to cope with what the real world was doing at the moment. So Orsinia gave a room for my imagination, it gave me perhaps a little bit of a hiding place for my imagination. And yet I could deal with matters that were morally

important to me in an imaginative space, so it's not all that different perhaps from the other planet in a science-fiction story, which gives you the same escape from immediate Earth to a place where your imagination can arrange things."

"I am classed and referred to as a sci-fi writer. And that I think is unfair and untrue"

So was inventing Orsinia also about breaking free of what we call realistic fiction? "It was, yes," she says without hesitation. However, having studied Italian and French literature, she also points out that "my reading was mostly formed on 19th-century and 20th-century realistic fiction" – hence Orsinia being in Europe rather than the Americas, "where my imagination could just be itself in a landscape of literature it was familiar with".

Politics entered Le Guin's work gradually, as the revolutionary spirit of the '60s drew Le Guin into more direct political engagement. "It began with protest against bomb testing and then general leftist activity," she says, "and then of course came feminism in the late '60s and '70s, and that was after all a very highly political movement."

Both reflecting and sometimes criticising the spirit of the times, these were years when Le Guin wrote the extraordinary sequence of novels that established her reputation. Books such as *A Wizard Of Earthsea* (1968), which followed the story of a (crucially in the context of the USA in the 1960s or indeed today, red-brown skinned) magical practitioner, and feminist SF tale *The Left Hand Of Darkness* (1969), set on a planet where the inhabitants are neither male nor female, adroitly subverted emerging genre conventions.

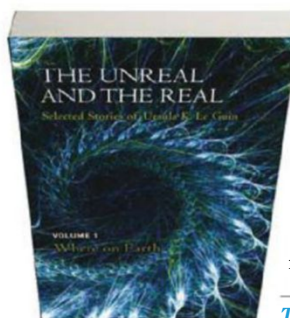
As someone who was at the leading edge of new ideas in the 1960s, how does she react to living through a more conservative era? "I hesitate to talk about it because famously when one is quite old, one is always sitting around saying, 'My country isn't what it was and things are going to the dogs,'" she says. Nevertheless, she adds, it's "really disappointing" to see "what they call conservatism, but what I call reactionism" in full Reaganite flower. "I respected conservatives, but these are not conservatives, they're reactionaries, they're simply reacting *against*, they have no positive programme at all," she says. Then there are her ecological concerns, "what we are doing to the larger economy of the entire planet, the ecology that supports us", which she has been writing about "directly or indirectly for 40 years".

Maybe the world is beginning to come round to her way of thinking. Recently, the National Book Foundation in the USA awarded Le Guin the Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters, and you suspect that, while she doesn't come across as the least bit vain, she'll enjoy the recognition.

Returning to the subject of the poetry that now takes up so much of her writing time, *SFX* asks her if she's frustrated that she'll be remembered more for her novels than for her verse? "My only frustration is that I am still classed and referred to as a sci-fi writer," she says. "And that I think is unfair and untrue." Not because she's "ashamed" of her SF work, she stresses: she's proud of it.

She doesn't say this, but it would be true: calling Ursula K Le Guin a sci-fi writer is to overlook the fact she's one of the most significant American writers of recent years. **SFX**

The Unreal And The Real Volumes 1 & 2 are out now.





POWERED

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN SUPERHEROES COLLIDE WITH THE COP SHOW? STEPHEN

POWER



ING UP

JEWELL WALKS THE POWERS BEAT...

We went back in time and had monkeys fucking at the dawn of man," smiles Brian Michael Bendis. "And they're going to do their own thing..."

The acclaimed comics writer is telling *SFX* how the PlayStation Network's forthcoming adaptation of his and Michael Avon Oeming's creator-owned series *Powers* might just differ from its four-colour incarnation. But while there may not be any fornicating primates on the screen – at least, for now – Bendis says showrunner Charlie Huston is staying true to the high-concept premise of a pair of homicide detectives investigating superhero-related crimes.

"What Charlie has done is cherry-pick elements of the comic series to craft his own thing," says Bendis. "What I hope happens – and is already happening behind the scenes – is that the *Powers* TV show creates its own mythology and goes off on its own way to the comic." ➔



SUSAN HEYWARD IS DEENA PILGRIM

Were you aware of the long development of *Powers* from comic book to TV series?

🗨️ No, it was just another audition. I wasn't aware they were trying to make a series or had been working on it for so long.

Did you turn to the comics for research?

🗨️ My initial response was all instinct. After I was in the callback process, I read the comics which were my main source of inspiration. I wanted to get to the essence of who I thought Deena was. Right now, I'm working through a book called *Homicide* which is about getting into the brain of a detective.

Is that your window into the more procedural aspects of the show?

🗨️ Yes. I'm a homicide detective so I see people at their worst and their deadest. I go sniffing around their history, why someone killed them.

What appealed to you about Charlie Huston's script?

🗨️ There was a strong sense of need from every character which is exciting because when those needs are at cross purposes there's a chance for real deep conflict. The world isn't always glamorous. We've got a great metaphor for superpowers as huge celebrities with endorsement deals and money and fans, but it's not always shiny and glittery.

How is it working with Sharlto Copley?

🗨️ I find Sharlto incredibly inventive and very tense. He'll ask a lot of questions so it can be a whirlwind of trying things and then just saying, "Ok, let's give that one a try."

Tara Bennett

Deena wonders why she has to be the halitosis assessor.



First published by Image Comics in 2000 before moving to Marvel's boutique Icon imprint in 2004, *Powers* proved to be the Portland-based author's calling card. Going on to become one of the House of Ideas' leading architects, he has since enjoyed long runs on titles such as *Avengers*, *All-New X-Men* and *Guardians Of The Galaxy*. However, *Powers'* path to the screen has not been so smooth. Optioned for the cinema by Sony Pictures in 2001, it was eventually decided that TV would be a better fit with FX and Sony Pictures Television teaming up to shoot a pilot starring Jason Patric and Lucy Punch.

With Bendis conceding that "it was all about the chemistry," FX then decided not to proceed any further, allowing the PlayStation Network to pick up the baton, ordering a ten-episode run and appointing thriller author Charlie Huston as showrunner and *Falling Skies'* Remy Aubuchon as executive producer. "Charlie was in the writers' room for the FX series and he wrote a script, which I and everybody involved uniformly pointed to and said, 'Now, that is *Powers*!'" recalls Bendis. "It was funny and dark and did everything that I wanted the show to do."

Having written the likes of *Wolverine* and *Moon Knight* for Marvel, Huston is well versed in the comic book medium. "Like myself, he is a crime writer who happens to completely understand the genre of superheroes and that's what was needed for the TV show," says Bendis. "As anyone who loves the genre will tell you, it has to be in your blood. You can't just come in and make your way in it; you have to have it in you at a cellular level."

Just as Robert Kirkman has taken a hands-on approach with *The Walking Dead*, Bendis has been closely involved with every step of *Powers'* production.

"I'm graciously holding onto Robert's zombie-like coattails as we move forward," laughs Bendis, who acts as an executive producer and will co-write the finale with Huston. "It's Charlie's show but because I'm also a writer and one of the creators, I was there during the first weeks of the writers' room in LA. It was cool because one of the few things I know all the answers to is *Powers*, so when people ask me about it, I sound like a genius."

Crucially, he also participated in the casting process. "It's true with any show, but especially true with genre mash-ups like this, that the actors become their own version of the characters and are not just reading lines from the comic book. I wanted to keep the spirit of the characters from the comic but I wanted them to become their own thing."

"THE SUPER HERO GENRE HAS TO BE IN YOUR BLOOD"



Pilgrim and Walker's on-page look differs just slightly from the screen.



Modern graffiti artists dodge the law by affecting a more dapper appearance.

I always cite *Dexter* as my inspiration here – the original novels and the show were like parallel universes examining the same thing, and that's what I wanted with this. With that mandate, we went looking and I'm very happy that we've got someone with the calibre of Sharlto Copley (*District 9*) on board as he's bringing all kinds of new energy to Walker. He's got the poise of someone who used to be a superhero."

GOING RETRO

While Copley's casting has met with almost universal approval, there has been some fan disquiet after African-American actress Susan Heywood landed the part of the formerly blonde Deena. "There are some characters like Callista, where the actress (Olesya Rulin) looks exactly like a Mike Oeming cartoon, but that was a happy accident," reasons Bendis. "When you see Sharlto and Susan together, they look like Walker and Deena in their own way. It doesn't take you much to get there because no one in the world looks like Walker does in the comic. If someone who looked like that walked into the room, you'd scream!"

With Noah Taylor and Eddie Izzard playing the villainous Johnny Royale and "Big Bad" Wolfe respectively, Michelle Forbes (*Battlestar Galactica*, *Star Trek: The Next Generation*) won the crucial part of archetypal superheroine Retro Girl. Though her death formed the basis of the inaugural *Powers* comics arc, viewers will be given the chance to get to know her properly. "For people who read the books, it's nice that they don't know what's going to happen as our first storyline isn't 'Who Killed Retro Girl?'," explains Bendis. "Mike and I did that because we didn't think we'd get to the third issue. We thought we'd get cancelled so we'd better run it quick. If we were to do it all over again, I'd do it like this."

Praising Huston for "coming up with a way to give Mike, as the artist, a voice on the show," Bendis stresses that Oeming's angular, Manga-esque style is also represented in

Retro Girl's distinctive design. "She's our big hero and is like our Beyoncé of superheroes," he explains. "But unlike in the comic book, she's not dead at the start of the series so we get to see that she's been around for a very long time. We also see all of her marketing including this cartoon show that has been on the air for decades. The look of that show and all the merchandising is all in the look of Mike's artwork. That seems unique and exciting to me because that's one of the things that always ends up going by the wayside in these adaptations. Even in *Watchmen*, you don't feel

Dave Gibbons other than in the costumes because it's live action, it's not a cartoon."

One aspect *Powers* does share with the movie version of that revisionist superhero opus is its unflinching adult tone, setting it apart from the likes of *Arrow* and, dare we say it, *Gotham*. Having provided one of the initial influences for Ed Brubaker and Greg Rucka's DC Comics police procedural *Gotham Central*, from which Fox's Batman prequel is derived, it seems unfortunate timing that *Powers* has been beaten to the TV screen. However, Bendis is confident that the two shows are very different beasts.

"Almost every ten minutes you'll see something that you will never see on network TV," he says. "There's something that happens in our first five minutes of the first episode where you will go, 'You will never see that on *Gotham*!'" **SFX**

Powers will be shown in the UK on the PlayStation Network.



EDDIE IZZARD IS WOLFE

You play a villain who's featured heavily as the comic book unfolds. Are they using Wolfe the same way in the series?

☞ We're going in a slightly different place. [At the start] he's a less visible character. We take the essence of characters and story and build in that direction. I made him English because if he's that old, he'd need to be English. You only have two centuries in America. Plus all superheroes are American. It's been a historical thing which is interesting from a European perspective because we have all this history sitting around.

What was it about *Powers* that lured you back into another TV series commitment?

☞ It's got interesting places to drive to and I'm in exactly the right place in my life to play this role. It's tricky to land because he has to be dark but beguiling.

Aside from the accent, are you finding any other interesting quirks to Wolfe?

☞ I've worked out his theme song is "Mona Lisa" as I've been walking around covered in blood. It fits so oddly. I've already pitched this to Charlie (Huston). I feel like I need to sing it at some point while killing. It's such an odd song about a woman who is a block of ice. "Many dreams have been brought to your door step. They just lie there and they die there..." What a fucking line!

Do you feel any affinity to superhero stories?

☞ I have the powers of trans in my own life. It looks like a massive curse but it's actually a massive blessing. It's genetics and not a choice and that links me to the powers thing.

Tara Bennett

Brightly coloured duct tape is the new thing on the Paris runways.

THE ABYSS

LIFE'S ABYSS AND THEN YOU DIVE... CALUM WADDELL RECALLS THE TROUBLED TALE OF JAMES CAMERON'S SUB-AQUATIC EPIC

JAMES CAMERON WAS not yet "the king of the world" when he embarked on the underwater odyssey of *The Abyss*, but – having helmed both *The Terminator* (1984) and *Aliens* (1986) – he was fast becoming an A-list filmmaker.

Indeed, *The Abyss*, which reportedly cost between \$60 and \$70 million to produce (a significant increase on *Aliens* which cost less than \$20 million), heralded Cameron's arrival into certified blockbuster-dom. If *The Terminator* was a B-movie with multiplex ambitions, and *Aliens* helped to solidify sci-fi as summer "event" fodder, then *The Abyss* was Cameron's attempt to craft an ambitious, pricey, special effects-laden epic.

It was also where Cameron began to earn his reputation as a slave-driving director, with cast and crew expected to work for 70 hours every week, confined and sometimes submerged more than 30 feet underwater in an empty nuclear reactor in South Carolina.

Leading lady Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio (then a star-to-watch following her turn in

Scorsese's *The Color of Money*) had a breakdown. Stories surfaced about actor Ed Harris storming off the set after a near drowning. And the filmmaker's own brother was asked to hold his breath and allow a large crab to crawl out of his mouth. All in the name of art, of course.

Cameron himself also claimed to have come close to death when, calling the shots from underneath the waves, the director's oxygen tank ran out of air and he struggled to swim to the surface. It was a scenario that encouraged team members to wear t-shirts with the logo "Life's Abyss and then you dive".



The inevitable question is, then, was *The Abyss* fun for anyone?

"I actually had a good time on *The Abyss*," shares star Michael Biehn – a Cameron veteran having also appeared in *The Terminator* and *Aliens*. "I know not everyone enjoyed themselves but I thought it was a lot of fun. I actually enjoyed being under the water for long periods of time and dealing with that sort of intensity. But I had worked with Jim before. That was my third time and I had a shorthand with him. We were able to bullshit with each other. We had developed a pretty good relationship and he even let me tweak some of my dialogue a little bit. All I needed to say was, 'Hey Jim – can I change this? I really think it would benefit my character' and he would be open about that – which is what you want from a director. So I didn't have too many problems on *The Abyss*. I knew that Jim demanded a lot and that was cool. He also had his wife with him on that movie – Gale Anne Hurd, who was the producer. And listen, man, she was tough too. But as long as you were not messing around ➔



WON'T SOMEONE THINK OF THE RAT?

The Abyss is one of the few flicks to fall foul of the BBFC's (sometimes) strict animal cruelty laws. The "liquid breathing" that Cameron illustrates in the movie actually does exist – and works (not that we are lining up to try it) – but the sight of a terrified rat being plunged into a potion of oxygen-heavy fluid was too much for UK censors. All British release copies of *The Abyss* skip this sequence – although the curious can easily find it streaming on YouTube. However, given that actor Ed Harris claims that he almost drowned making *The*

Abyss ("For a brief second, I thought, 'This is it,'" stated the actor in a 1989 interview with the *New York Times*) perhaps our moral guardians should have also considered "cruelty to actors" when certifying Cameron's marine-themed masterwork...



she was fine. No one who came onto the film thought it was going to be an easy ride."

In *The Abyss*, Biehn plays Lt. Coffey, a Navy SEALs leader who fronts an expedition to recover a missing nuclear submarine. In a race against time (the Cold War-era script has the Russians also moving in) Coffey bases his team on a deep sea platform used for extracting oil and run by the less-than-welcoming Bud Brigman (Ed Harris). Adding to the intrigue is Bud's wife Lindsey (Mastrantonio) – the two have separated but are bound together when natural disaster and flooding beset their workplace. In addition, Biehn's character turns increasingly more malevolent as the pressure of dwelling in a deep sea environment alters his personality and sparks a sadistic streak of paranoia. Throw in a subplot about America and Russia in an Armageddon-instigating showdown, and friendly aliens acting as some of cinema's most bizarre peacekeeping agents, and it quickly becomes clear that *The Abyss* was far and away Cameron's most oddball career decision.

"I don't know man, I just thought it was a really cool movie to be a part of and Jim was a brave guy for trying to make it in those conditions," says Biehn. "I told Jim after we did *Aliens* that I like playing villains more than good guys. I think I said to him, 'Being the hero is better for my bank balance, so I get it,

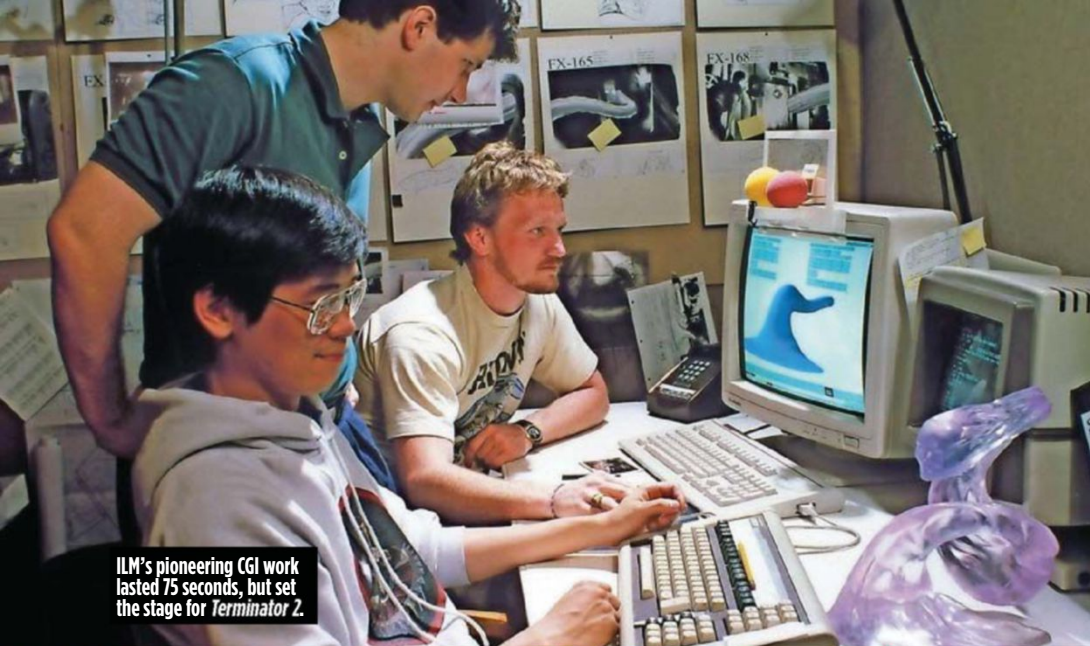
"NO ONE THOUGHT IT WAS GOING TO BE AN EASY RIDE"

but I really want to do something where I get to go a little crazy' [laughs]. That might be why I got *The Abyss*. Either that or he knows that it is just me and Bill Paxton who keep coming back for more [laughs]. But I like to justify the reasoning of somebody who is losing his mind. I enjoy trying to understand why people are the way they are, you know? If you are a good guy you are just a good guy – like I was in *Aliens* – but if you are a bad guy you get to pick at the reasons for why that might be. With the character of Coffey in *The Abyss*, at first you don't know if he is going to be the hero or the villain. There is a real ambivalence to him and I embraced that. It really gave me something to chew on."

Whilst Biehn describes *The Abyss* favourably, there is little denying that the longstanding acceptance of the film as one of the most arduous shoots in Hollywood

Did the stars know that this little scene would go on to change cinema forever?





ILM's pioneering CGI work lasted 75 seconds, but set the stage for *Terminator 2*.



Ed Harris and Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio get very intimate.



Wouldn't it have been easier to put the water in there afterwards?

history remains. Prodded to give some details about this, the actor is a little cagey – but he's also clearly defensive when it comes to Cameron.

"With *The Abyss* the stuff that went on during the shoot has sort of become legendary," he laughs. "I was there and, yeah, some of the actors on the film had a hard time with Jim. I accept that maybe it was little easier for me. If Jim started yelling at me I would tell him to fuck off – we knew each other well enough to have that relationship. But Ed Harris and Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio had a few battles with him. I am not sure how much of that came from the circumstances on the set. I know not everyone was thrilled to be submerged underwater for hours and hours. However, when you work with an ensemble cast there is always the potential for tension to break out. People get upset if they don't think their character is getting as much attention – or if they think they are not getting such good lines. It can be anything. Honestly, though, I didn't get involved – I was just trying to get on with making the movie."

GOING DEEP

At least one thing that was certain about *The Abyss* was its lofty aspirations in the field of special effects. Breaking new boundaries with its digital effects trickery, something that Cameron would build upon with his later *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* (1991), *The Abyss* would deservedly win an Oscar for Best Visual Effects.

"What Jim was doing with the special effects was another reason I signed on for *The Abyss*," admits Biehn. "I mean, I loved the concept of the movie. You know – this team of people being stuck in a very difficult situation – and I also knew that it was going to be a challenging but rewarding experience. However, the way that *The Abyss* was breaking down visual frontiers drew me right in. The stuff with the aliens emerging from the water – that was groundbreaking. It was totally fresh. I was very excited about being a part of that."

Despite Cameron's impressive box office record, *The Abyss* experienced a tumultuous journey to cinemas. The movie's running time was cut down by half an hour (debuting at a still bum-numbing 140 minutes) and rumours surfaced that Ed Harris would not promote the picture (he eventually did, while forthrightly maintaining the hardships he went through during the production). Slotted in for a competitive summer opening in August 1989 (where it failed to hold its own against the juggernaut that was the Steve Martin comedy *Parenthood*), the oddball story of underwater extraterrestrial life paddled its way to a worldwide gross of \$90 million. Ultimately, *The Abyss* was no *Terminator* or

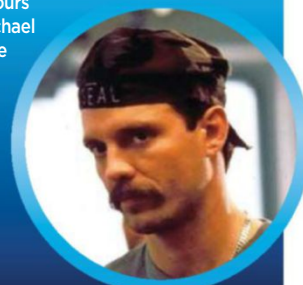


Gun usually trumps hard object.

WITH GREAT POWER..?

To this day rumours abound that Michael Biehn was at one time slated to appear as Peter Parker in a James Cameron-directed movie outing for Marvel's iconic web-slinger.

Of course, such a project never got off the ground and, despite the existence of concept art that appears to feature his Spider-face, the actor is quick to put such whispers to rest. "I keep hearing this but it is not true," he laughs. "Jim did work on making a *Spider-Man* movie – I remember that period. It was just after *Aliens*, I think, but I was already 30 at that time. I was far too old to play Peter Parker – you need someone who is in his 20s for that role. So I don't know where that idea ever came from. We never discussed *Spider-Man* – but it seems to be this crazy urban legend."



Aliens and critics were generally perplexed by the genre-hopping madness that Cameron's script served-up. The theatrical poster may promise a straightforward underwater adventure but *The Abyss* eventually veers into sci-fi territory by way of James Bond-espionage theatrics, a touch of fantastical whimsy and even a dose of psycho-horror (courtesy of a grimacing Biehn).

"I never really paid attention to how it was being received," maintains Biehn. "I didn't think of myself as a big movie star and I still don't. When I did *The Abyss* I had done *Aliens* so, yeah, some people knew who I was, but I made sure I didn't get caught up in premieres and critical reviews. I don't think I walked up the red carpet for *The Abyss* or anything [laughs]. I never even had a PR person to tell me if it was doing well. All I knew is that I was proud of the movie and I was glad that I did it. And now people seem to like it, right? Sometimes it just takes a little time."

At least part of the reason *The Abyss* is now considered something of a contemporary classic is down to Cameron's insistence on getting his initial 'director's cut' out to the masses. Unleashed to impressive feedback in 1993, the full 170-minute version of the esoteric sea-faring opus unveils a grander scope and even more alien-action – although it fails to alter the fact that *The Abyss* is still a very, very odd ride beneath the ocean.

"It is a film that defies your expectations," Biehn tells *SFX*. "Of all the movies I have done, I think people want stories about *The Abyss* almost as much as they want stories about *Aliens* or *The Terminator*..." **SFX**

PENNY DREADFUL

What's happening in the world of horror movies this month...



It's easy to bitch and moan about all the terrible, cynical things going on in horror. But now Christmas is coming, 2015 is on its way and I'm desperately trying to look on the bright

side! Hugs for Eli Roth for gifting the world with a "re-staging" of *Cabin Fever*! Praise be for another *Saw* movie! Happy new year...




MORE SAW?!


 "I'm going to go on record and say I am finished with the horror genre," announced *Saw/Insidious/The Conjuring* director James Wan back in September 2013. But now Wan, whose upcoming slate includes *The Conjuring 2: The Enfield Poltergeist* and horror/comic crossover *Malignant Man*, has been attached to another *Saw* movie, hinted at for 2016. Two of the series producers (Mark Burg and Oren Koules) recently revealed plans to launch a new *Saw* at Comic-Con 2016 with James Wan and Leigh Whannell back on board. Depressing? Lazy? Cheap? Maybe. Or maybe not. I'm willing to hope for something exciting and inventive and new. Because James Wan is not an idiot. He revitalised the genre with

Insidious and tapped into a new audience with *The Conjuring* – why not make a new *Saw* movie for a post-torture porn generation? Wes Craven made *A Nightmare On Elm Street* – he also made *Scream*. Why shouldn't Wan be progressive and self-reflective in the same way? Go-Wan, give it a chance...

PROPERTY: CONDEMNED


 Spare a thought for *Saw II, III* and *IV* director Darren Lynn Bousman who's cracking along with his next film *Abattoir* – a haunted house movie starring Lin Shaye and a bunch of E-listers centring on a house "built from rooms where horrific tragedies have occurred". Pretty ground breaking. Christmas spirit, whatever, I have no qualms in assuming this'll be guff.

REMAKE FEVER

 What else is new? Not the script for Eli Roth's new project, certainly, a re-staging of *Cabin Fever* that he's producing with director Travis Zariwsky at the helm. "I almost see this like re-staging a play," said horror's answer to Shakespeare. "I'm excited to see what ideas Travis and the cast bring to it." This isn't the first remake that's stuck slavishly to the original. Michael Haneke's US remake of his own Austrian film *Funny Games* was virtually identical, save for the casting, which turned out to be what broke it. It was impossible to believe Naomi Watts and Tim Roth couldn't have totally had Michael Pitt and Brady Corbet in a fight – golf club or otherwise. Then there was Gus Van Sant's

"experimental" remake of Hitchcock's *Psycho*, which no one really saw the point of – when it's Hitchcock it probably doesn't need an update starring Anne Heche. I really like *Cabin Fever*, but does it warrant a re-do? It's in colour, it's in English and it's not even particularly old so I just can't see the point. Up side? Maybe it'll keep Roth busy enough to stop him making another *Hostel* film.

HAIL TO THE KING

 Not-A-Sequel-Or-A-Remake-Arama! *Evil Dead* godhead Sam Raimi and his *Evil Dead* remake disciple Fede Alvarez are teaming up for an original horror/thriller which sounds interesting. *A Man In The Dark*, which Alvarez wrote with his *Evil Dead* remake collaborator Rodo Sayagues,

DREADFUL THING TO DO

The winter is drawing in. Everything's dark and cold. When better to get your gothic on? Head to BBC iPlayer for their Gothic Literature Collection – it's a series of documentaries about classic horror stories and how they came about, including Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Robert Louis Stevenson's *Doctor Jekyll And Mister Hyde*. Perfect pre-Christmas viewing.
www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/group/p0287yq9





DREADFUL A-Z OF HORROR

Penny's monthly dictionary of doom

K IS FOR... KIDS

WHO CAN KILL A CHILD?

(Narciso Ibáñez
Serrador, 1976)

► Harrowing Spanish chiller where a smug British couple are terrorised on a remote island by feral little darlings. Packed with unforgettable imagery including one traumatising scene involving a human piñata. See also *Come And Play*, *Vinyan*, *The Children* and *Children Of The Corn*.



VILLAGE OF THE DAMNED

(Wolf Rilla, 1960)

► Buttoned down, nightmarish adap of John Wyndham's *The Midwich Cuckoos* where a village is overrun by platinum-haired, angel-faced tyrants of unknown paternity when all the women of childbearing age simultaneously fall pregnant. Remade in 1995 by John Carpenter with Christopher Reeve starring.



THE INNOCENTS

(Jack Clayton, 1961)

► Gorgeous, chilling adaptation of Henry James' *The Turn Of The Screw*, where a skittish governess takes charge of two angelic children who seem to be under the influence of the ghosts of two former servants. Themes of sex, masculinity and insanity abound - haunting, important and open to endless interpretations.



ORPHAN

(Jaume Collet-Serra, 2009)

► Flawed but original and undeniably freakish fable about a family who take in an orphan girl who turns out to be, um, something else. Collet-Serra went on to make ludicrous Liam Neeson actioners *Unknown* and *Non-Stop*, while super-talented young star Isabelle Fuhrman bagged a role in *The Hunger Games* and is set to appear in new Stephen King adap *Cell*.



Do you believe
in *Magic Magic*?

follows three teens who break into the house of someone they think is a rich, helpless blind man but who turns out to be a full on card-carrying nutter. A home invasion horror in reverse, this is promising. The *Evil Dead* redux wasn't a masterpiece but it was at least good looking and highly committed - grown up and harsh and in no way playing to a mass audience. With the success of *The Guest* (out 29 December on DVD) it feels like the right time to reinvent this subgenre so I'm on board. No cast announced as yet - an extra star if they cast Bruce Campbell as a blind stealth ninja...

REVIEW OF THE YEAR

2014 is coming to a close: it's been a good year for horror. For every *Annabelle* there was *The Babadook*. For every *A Haunted House 2* there was *What We Do In The Shadows*. 2014 was the year which brought us indie gems *Cheap Thrills* and *Blue Ruin*. It was the year where *Cold In July* and *The Guest* proved there's mileage in stylish '80s-style horror action thrillers and *Willow Creek* and *The Borderlands* proved found

footage can still be scary. This was the year where *The Devil's Due* gave us a viral far better than the movie, where *I, Frankenstein* graciously disappeared without trace and *Paranormal Activity 5* didn't even get released. It was the year where *We Are What We Are* won back respect for the remake and where *Wake In Fright* got its first proper UK release. In 2014 female psychological horror was queen - *Under The Skin* shocked and seduced, *Magic Magic* intoxicated and repelled, while *Oculus* gave us two stories in one. *Horns* showed us Radders can rock a US accent, *The Purge: Anarchy* showed us that the prolific Jason Blum isn't slowing down any time soon, and Hollywood blockbusters proved that horror directors are the very best in the world as James Gunn ruled the universe with *Guardians Of The Galaxy*, and Scott Derrickson was snapped up for *Doctor Strange*. Need more proof? Check out the new *Avengers: Age Of Ultron* trailer - it couldn't be more horror if it tried. It's the best time to be a horror fan. Bring on 2015... **SFX**



Macon Blair was
looking for revenge
in *Blue Ruin*.



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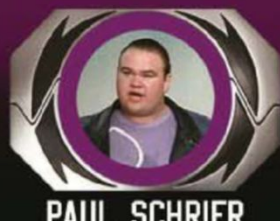


MIGHTY MORPHIN POWER CON

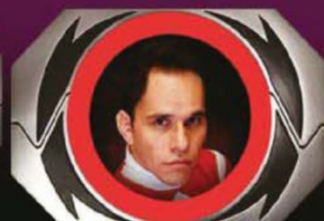


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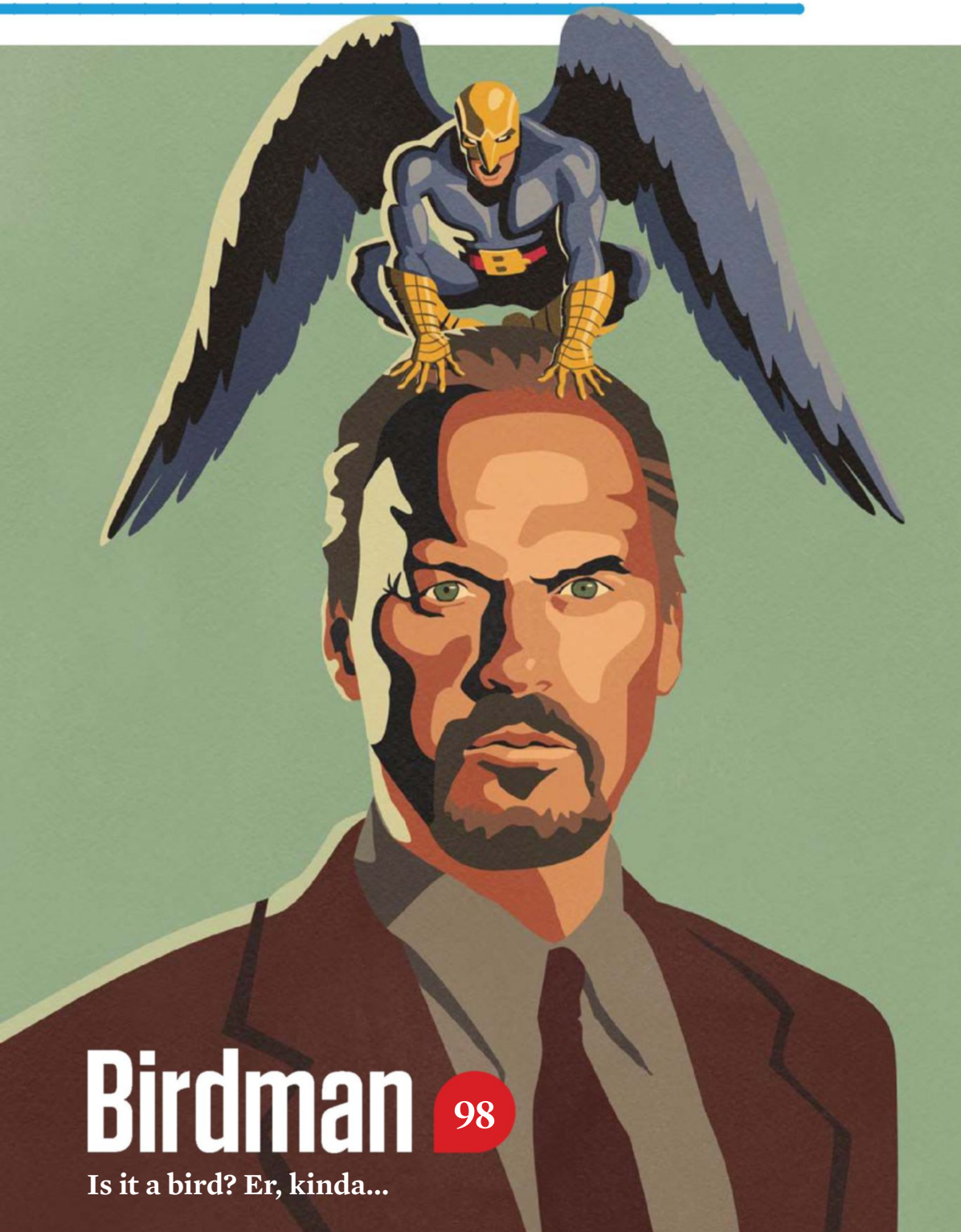
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Rated

edited by Ian Berriman

The best reviews section in the universe

★★★★★ Superb ★★★★★ Good ★★★★★ Average ★★★★★ Poor ★ Terrible



Birdman

98

Is it a bird? Er, kinda...

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Highlights

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The Woman In Black: Angel Of Death

Hammer heads back to Eel Marsh House in the gothic ghost story sequel.

100



Deliver Us From Evil

Eric Bana's New York cop battles supernatural evil in this based-on-a-true-story shocker.

110



The Galaxy Game

Karen Lord's follow-up to *The Best Of All Possible Worlds* is a coming-of-age tale about a telepathic teen.

The Hunger Games: Mockingjay, Part One

J-Law plays war games



Release Date: OUT NOW!

12A | 123 minutes

Director: Francis Lawrence

Cast: Jennifer Lawrence, Josh Hutcherson, Liam Hemsworth, Woody Harrelson, Elizabeth Banks, Julianne Moore, Philip Seymour Hoffman

AS DISTRICTS ARE devastated above ground, other struggles rage underground. We're not just talking Woody Harrelson's straggly Games vet Haymitch Abernathy's problems with "prohibition", either. With her role beefed up from Suzanne Collins's third and final *Hunger Games* novel, how can Elizabeth Banks's future fashion grotesque Effie Trinket hope to look ab fab in a rebel hold-out with serious wardrobe issues?

Given Effie's egregious situation, it's a wonder she looks as presentable as she does. And for Effie, read *Mockingjay, Part One*. Even with the odds against him, returning director Francis Lawrence joins sturdy-

Jennifer Lawrence tugs us into Katniss's fraught humanity, invoking memories of Ripley

handed writers Peter Craig (*The Town*) and Danny Strong (*The Butler*) to mount a rich, punchy, well-paced treatment of a tricky novel: an unlikely victory comparable to felling hoverplanes with arrows. After all, the outcome was never certain. If Gary Ross's first *Hunger Games* flick benefitted from lunging fast into the arena, *Catching Fire* repeated the trick and proved it stood repeating. Now that Katniss Everdeen's revolt at *Fire*'s climax has pushed the future districts into a climate of unrest, countered by state oppression, there are no games to play but political ones. This time, it's war? Yes, but for unwary viewers expecting the fun stuff of bonkers baboons terrorising teenagers it could just be a bore.

The issue of division is equally sticky. Tackling an already divisive novel with the divisive decision (see *The Hobbit, Deathly Hallows*) to divide it into two movies, the third and fourth *Games* films raise a question: how many divisions can a story take without collapsing?

But *Part One* holds up, mostly, with Jennifer Lawrence doing some proper heavy lifting. On the page Katniss initially lacks her old spark, a point flagged on screen by District 13 president-turned-rebel Alma Coin (Julianne Moore) when she tells rebel-leader Plutarch Heavensbee (Philip Seymour Hoffman), "This is



not the girl that you describe." As Plutarch and Coin slowly coerce Katniss into becoming a symbol for revolt against the venomous President Snow's (Donald Sutherland) decadent Capitol, the plot rests less on scraps than strategy; less on action than debates about how to start the action; and less on Katniss than the absence of the girl on fire. With heavy doses of recap and semi-meta stuff about making propaganda movies stacked on top, the focus shift threatens to distance viewers.

But J-Law tugs us into Katniss's fraught humanity, invoking memories of *Aliens*' harrowed Ripley as she wakes from troubled sleep in District 13's rebel base. (And yes, the ginger cat is here.) These layers of trepidation firm up

Katniss's position as a reluctant hero we can engage with, not a superhero: qualities rare enough in some adult fiction, let alone young adult fiction.

Director Francis Lawrence pushes YA boundaries as Katniss visits districts decimated by Snow's army, where streets spill with skulls. When Katniss, Gale (Liam Hemsworth) and a rag-tag propaganda film crew explore the devastated District 8, a makeshift hospital oozes with what censors like to call "injury detail". If the reverence for Katniss among the wounded verges on cheesy, the war-zone images and ear-bashing hoverplane attacks imbue Katniss's subsequent speech with a sense of potency. As she "becomes" Katniss again here, Lawrence steers her fear and rage into air-punching "Get away from her, you bitch!" terrain.



There's no trouble without rubble.

If one particular District 8 atrocity seems torn from today's headlines, the rebel debates about how to use the media as a weapon are equally, achingly of the now. But *Mockingjay* isn't a course in Advanced Media Know-how: the two-part split provides the elbow room needed to flesh out a boosted character count. In his last bow, Seymour Hoffman invests Plutarch with weathered heft. Judiciously expanding the novel beyond Katniss's perspective, added Coin-age benefits from Julianne Moore's authoritative delivery. Good, no-nonsense ground-level support comes from Natalie Dormer's Cressida, sort of Kate Adie with face tats.

Less successful is the decision to boost Effie's role: like Derek Zoolander gate-crashing *Fury* to pimp a tank, she lightens the tone but draws sniggers.

The vote's still out (and probably out for good) on the overall narrative value of Gale's charisma vacuum, though less is more for Josh Hutcherson's Peeta. Seen largely through ambiguous TV broadcasts, his arc ranges smartly from turncoat interviews with Stanley Tucci's Capitol creep Caesar to well-administered shocks.


Even with the pace-dampening burden of time spent on Katniss visiting old haunts, Francis Lawrence makes up for the arena's absence with punch-packing action jolts. The rebel assault on a dam is *Lord Of The Rings*-sized. Later, a tense night-time raid on the Capitol successfully splices sprawling effects work with grounding war-movie grit.

These beefed-up action beats are well integrated with Katniss's

viewpoint, especially when the Capitol incursion runs parallel to a tense vid-screen stand-off between two key verbal combatants. That poised weighting holds until the climactic cliffhanger, a better-paced send-off than the sudden drop that closed *The Desolation Of Smaug*.

Francis Lawrence faces more trials tackling Collins's rushed finale in *Part Two*, but the two-film split could give him vital air, assuming he doesn't go all *Return Of The King* on us. "I'm optimistic," shrugs Plutarch at one point, facing a new dread. On the strength of this gutsy, considered rewrite of the Games' rules, there's reason to be.

Kevin Harley

 Battle scenes were shot at a French apartment complex called Les Espaces d'Abraxas, which was also used in *Brazil*.

REBEL ROUSERS

Five more SF revolutionaries

ROJ BLAKE

Blake's 7

► Spent most of his time travelling through the galaxy sabotaging the bases of the despotic Federation. Though the rebel hero's intentions were noble, Blake's autocratic leadership style and increasing monomania often infuriated his comrades.

CAESAR

Conquest Of The Planet Of The Apes

► Child of Cornelius and Zira, this chimp had good reason to hate humanity: his parents were shot dead, and the circus owner who raised him died escaping interrogation.



Little wonder, then, that he led a revolt, releasing disobedient slave apes, arming them, and setting the city ablaze.

V

V For Vendetta

► In Alan Moore's classic comic, an anarchist fights the fascist regime ruling the UK with a combination of daggers, hacking and high explosives – blowing up London landmarks like Big Ben. Thanks to Anonymous, his Guy Fawkes mask is now a permanent bestseller at Forbidden Planet...

PRINCESS LEIA

Star Wars

► The Patty Hearst of the Rebel Alliance... in the sense that she's also a glamorous rich girl. The Alderaan royal has her fair share of blood on her hands – did the workers building the second Death Star really deserve to be blown to smithereens, hmm?



The Woman In Black: Angel Of Death

Back in black

★★★★★

Release Date: 1 January

15 | 98 minutes

Distributor: Entertainment One

Director: Tom Harper

Cast: Phoebe Fox, Dakklee Pendergast, Helen McCrory, Jeremy Irvine, Leanne Best, Lailah de Meza

AFTER WHAT HAPPENED LAST

time, you'd think no-one would ever go back to Eel Marsh House. And sure enough, no-one does – until something scarier than ghosts drives them to it.

Set some 40 years after the original, this sequel sees a pair of schoolteachers (Phoebe Fox and Helen McCrory) bringing a group of evacuees to the now derelict house, hoping to keep them safe from German bombers. It's a clever way of getting people back within the Woman's grasp, but compared with the evils of rations, sons shipped off to war and constant air raid sirens, can one vengeful ghost really be all that bad?

The answer is both yes and no. At first, the Woman's antics are confined to slamming doors and lurking morosely in corners. The background of the war seems far more frightening: every character in the movie has already been touched by tragedy, so a ghost just seems like yet another item on a long list of awful things they're coping with. There's

It's hard not to feel you've seen this before

no possibility of sympathising with the ghost's own sad backstory, either. Her suffering pales in comparison to that of the people she's menacing, to the point where you want to tell her to give it a bloody rest.

The balance of grief and fright finally tips in the final act, when the Woman stops hiding and starts luring children to their deaths. A scene in a bunker is proper nightmare fuel, but it's the only scare you'll really remember once the credits have rolled. Director Tom Harper clearly wanted this to feel like an old-fashioned, slow burning ghost story, but the result is just a little bit too slow. Phoebe Fox does a decent job of acting terrified, and she's likeable enough that you want her character to triumph over evil, but it's hard not to feel you've seen much of this before. If the Woman in Black fancies another sequel, she's going to have to learn a few new tricks.

Sarah Dobbs

Harper kept Phoebe Fox's adrenaline pumping by hiding and jumping out at her on set. Arghh!



"It's okay, my jacket collar will protect us both."

Birdman

Caw blimey

★★★★★

Release Date: 2 January

15 | 119 minutes

Distributor: Twentieth Century Fox

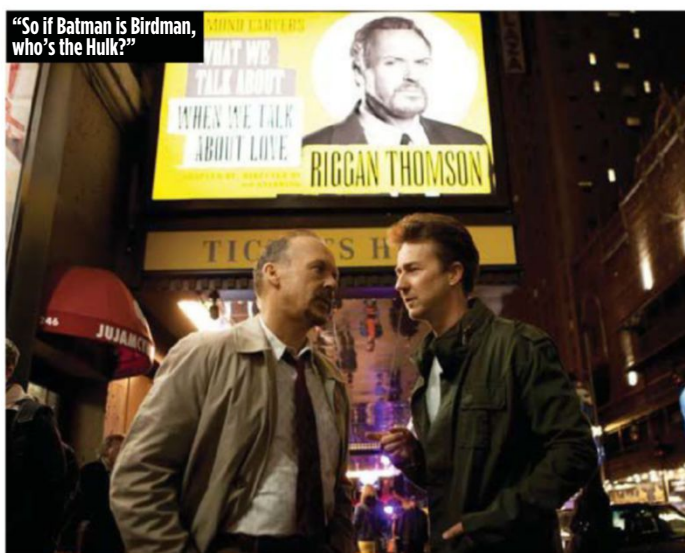
Director: Alejandro González Iñárritu

Cast: Michael Keaton, Emma Stone, Edward Norton, Zach Galifianakis, Naomi Watts

DIRECTOR ALEJANDRO

González Iñárritu is a man more known for exploring the darker corners of life with the likes of *Amores Perros*, *Babel* and *Biutiful*. Here, though, while the darkness remains on tap, it's blended with absurdist comedy and just a hint of fantasy.

Michael Keaton plays Riggan Thompson, an actor who's trying to escape his superhero career past and reinvent himself by staging a Broadway play. But the stresses and strains of mounting the production – particularly the needy weirdos in the cast and crew – are tipping



him ever closer to insanity as his obsession grows.

Keaton is perfect as Thompson, channelling both his own cowl-donning past as Batman and his typically twitchy performance style into the portrayal of a man who wishes he'd done more with his professional life, but who just can't

get out of his own way, a situation not helped by his old cinematic alter-ego whispering in his ear. Iñárritu's direction both grounds the film with Keaton's central role and sends it soaring, the camera drifting around the theatre and beyond in a way that makes the film look like one continuous shot (it isn't, but

he manages a convincing facsimile).

And it's not a one-man show, with fine, neurotic work from Edward Norton and Naomi Watts (as preening, driven fellow actors), Emma Stone (as Thompson's troubled daughter) and Zach Galifianakis, struggling to keep the whole show together as Riggan's best friend/producer.

Birdman won't be for everyone: the swirling camerawork and thrumming jazz percussion soundtrack can be off-putting at times. And if you're expecting much in the way of superhero action, don't be fooled by the trailer – that's extra spice, not the main course and not the focus of the director and his co-writers. In fact, the current pop culture fixation on comic book heroes comes in for plenty of ribbing. But with great acting, unique style and a crawl behind the varied neuroses of the theatrical world, it's not hard to see why the film is winning so much praise.

James White

To get the single-shot look, the cast had to perform up to 15 pages of dialogue at a time while hitting precise marks.

Enemy

The Two Jakes

★★★★★

Release Date: 5 December

15 / 90 minutes

Directors: Denis Villeneuve

Cast: Jake Gyllenhaal, Mélanie Laurent, Isabella Rossellini, Sarah Gadon

JAKE GYLLENHAAL'S

second collaboration with Denis Villeneuve begins with a quotation: "Chaos is order yet undeciphered." It's a line to remember for your post-*Enemy* rumination.

Gyllenhaal plays a beige-souled history lecturer, Adam Bell, who after having a film recommended to

him, spots his lookalike in the background. Bell quickly becomes obsessed with his doppelganger and tracks him down, identifying him as an actor named Anthony Claire.

Who is Claire? It's a question you'll be asking all through the film, and for quite a bit after. The clues are scattered throughout but the answer is likely to birth even more questions.

Enemy bears little resemblance to Villeneuve's aggressively mainstream *Prisoners*, instead playing like a top-tier *Twilight Zone* episode. And although it plays it pretty straight for the most part, prepare yourself for a twist that might well keep you up at night. **Steve O'Brien**

Enemy is loosely based on José Saramago's 2002 novel, *The Double* (Portuguese title *The Duplicated Man*).



Get Santa

★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

U / 102 minutes

Director: Christopher Smith



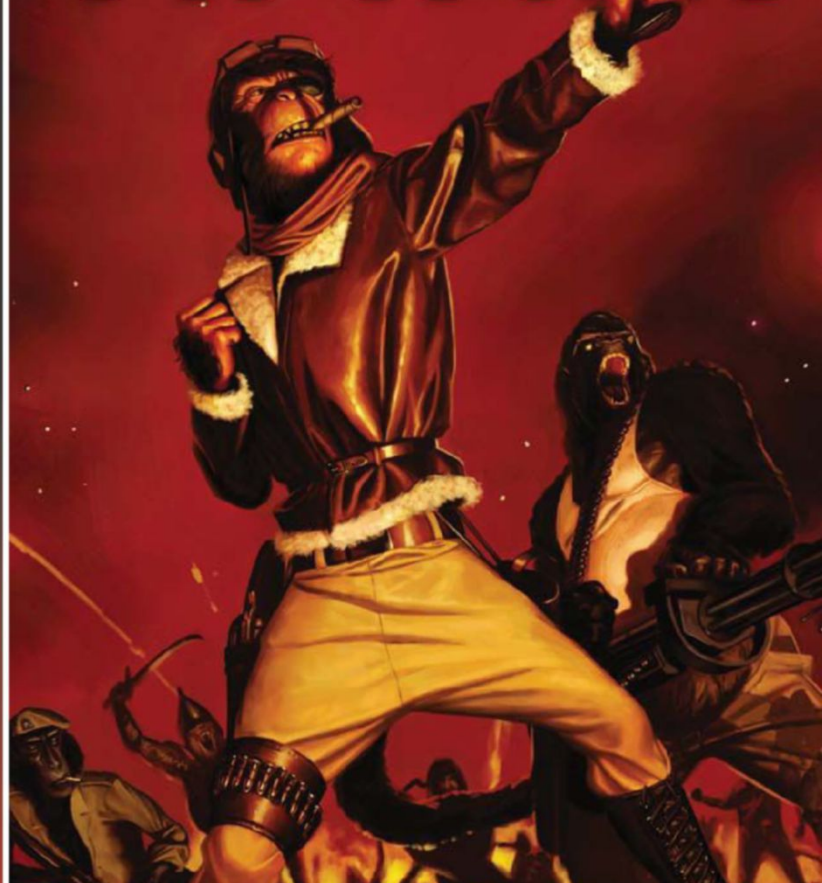
CHRISTOPHER Smith's previous films (*Creep*, *Severance*, *Black Death*) hardly seem ideal preparation for a Yuletide fantasy about an ex-convict (Rafe Spall) coming to the aid of a downed Father Christmas (Jim Broadbent). Yet the bracing black comedy of those horrors remains detectable here, especially when Saint Nick gets banged up and has to reinvent himself as a hardened lag to survive behind bars.

A subsequent shift into *Polar Express* territory isn't successful, due in part to a dreary North Pole and flying sleigh effects that stay defiantly earthbound. That said, we were tickled by the nods to *The Shawshank Redemption* and *The Godfather*. **Neil Smith**

ALSO OUT

Somewhere there exists a perfect universe in which all films are screened well in advance of print deadlines. Sadly, we don't live there. Which is why the mass of pulped wood you're holding in your hands right now can't tell you anything about **THE PYRAMID** (now on release), the new horror from *Haute Tension* writer Grégory Levasseur, in which a group of archaeologists get trapped in... well, take a wild guess. But fear not: visit <http://gamesradar.com/movies> and you can read all about it. Wondering whether **THE HOBBIT: THE BATTLE OF THE FIVE ARMIES** (out on 12 December) brings Peter Jackson's trilogy to a satisfying conclusion? Sorry, you'll have to head to the same place. Also escaping our judgement – but only temporarily – is the third **NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM** film, **SECRET OF THE TOMB** (19 December). You can run but you can't hide, movies!

MACAQUE ATTACK



Ack Ack Macaque's back and this time he brought an army. The award-winning trilogy concludes this January.

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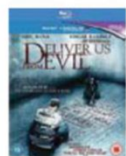
★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: 5 January

2014 | 15 | Blu-ray/DVD

Director: Scott Derrickson

Cast: Eric Bana, Edgar Ramirez, Joel McHale, Olivia Munn, Sean Harris, Chris Coy



IF THERE'S ONE

thing *Insidious* director Scott Derrickson's latest has going for it, it's an air of gritty

verisimilitude. It's "inspired" by the real-life experiences of former NYPD cop Ralph Sarchie – well, "real" if you give any credence to *Beware The Night*, his 2001 account of his paranormal experiences during his 16 years on the force. Filmed largely on the south Bronx streets that were Sarchie's turf, it has a strong sense of place; and it's anything but a welcoming environment – an ominous realm of squalid cellars and constant driving rain.

Eric Bana plays Sarchie, a lapsed Catholic who gradually becomes a believer in dark forces after encountering a series of cases – a wife-beater; a mother who tosses her two-year-old into the moat around a lion enclosure; a rotting corpse in a family's basement – which can be traced to a common source: the

Unfortunately, the story that unfolds just isn't particularly compelling

discovery, by an American patrol in Iraq, of a mysterious inscription written in Latin on a cave wall. An inscription which – for reasons never satisfactorily explained – can cause people to become possessed. Though not, obviously, ruggedly handsome cop protagonists.

Bana has to carry the film, and does a good job, bringing a simmering physicality to Sarchie. *Community*'s Joel McHale provides decent back-up as his wise-cracking partner. *The Newsroom*'s Olivia Munn does the best she can with the role of Bana's wife, who exists – as horror movie moms all too frequently do – simply to provide the hero with a yardstick for their monomania and something precious to lose. But the main reason to watch is Sean Harris. The British actor has played some remarkable characters, from Ian Brady to Ian Curtis, but possessed veteran Santino might eclipse them all. According to Derrickson, Harris basically put himself into a trance state to film one key, climactic sequence, and remembered nothing the next day. Sounds like hype, but when you watch him practically burning a hole in the screen with the intensity of his stare, it rings true.

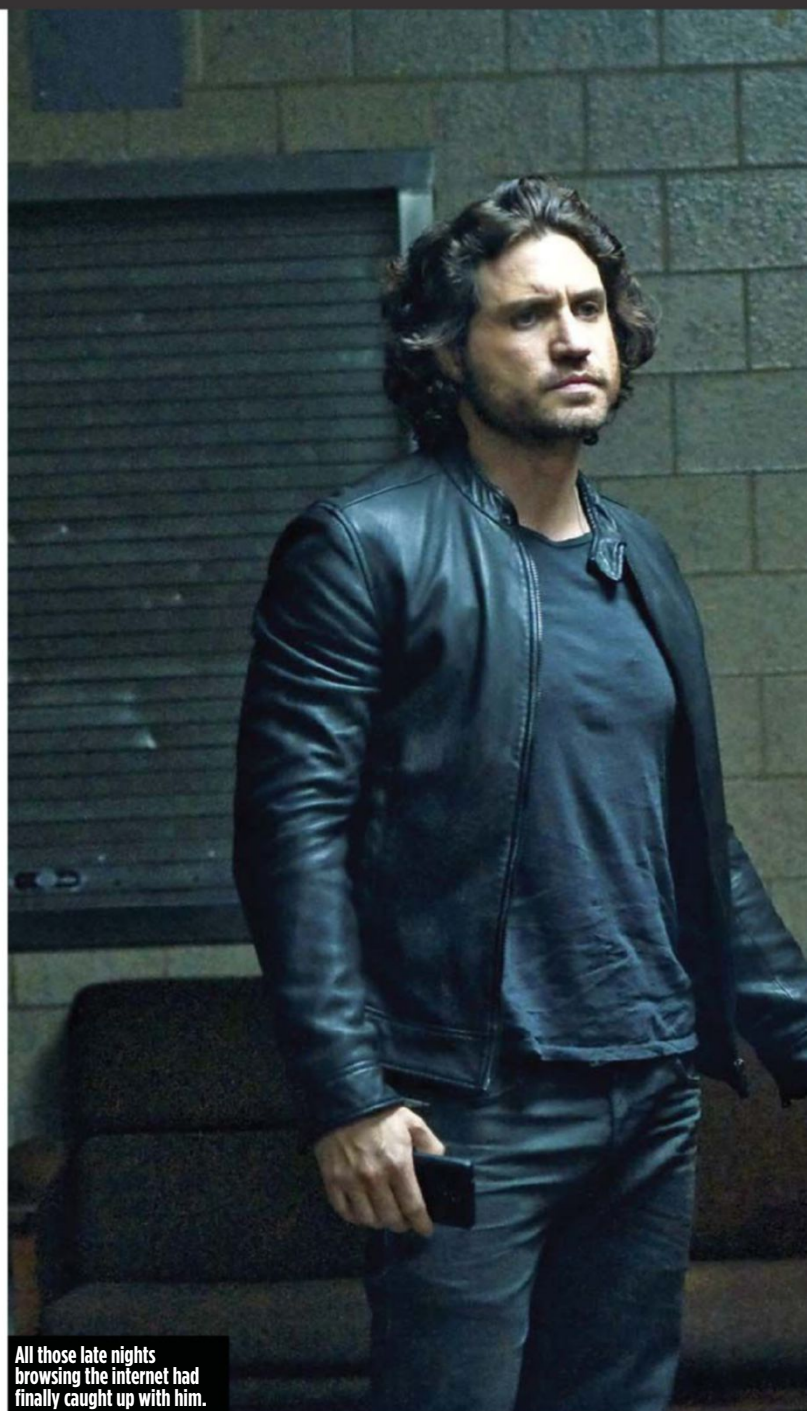
Strong performances then, presented within what is, for the most part (barring an asylum that seems like a throwback to the '50s), a solid-seeming world. Unfortunately, the story that unfolds there just isn't particularly compelling: a standard tale of possession/an investigator's journey from scepticism to faith. Only the police procedural elements feel remotely fresh, and they aren't enough to mask the pong of

All those late nights browsing the internet had finally caught up with him.

familiarity rising off the heap of hoary horror clichés.

Scary animals, for one. You would think that by now there wouldn't be a filmmaker left alive who isn't too ashamed to use the sudden appearance of a cat as a jump scare. But you'd be wrong. And puss is just the tip of the furry iceberg. We also have (deep breath) scary lions, a scary bear, a scary dog, scary flies, scary bats, a scary owl, and scary tropical fish. Eventually, having exhausted practically the entire animal kingdom, Derrickson is forced to resort to a scary *soft toy* owl. To be fair, this sequence – in

which said toy sinisterly rolls towards Sarchie's wide-eyed daughter – is extremely effective, but the fact that it's soundtracked by a music box cranking out "Pop Goes The Weasel" tells you everything you need to know about the film's lack of originality. It may also inspire a weary sigh that most of the interiors are illuminated by flickering bulbs; will we ever see a horror film that plays out entirely in buildings with adequate wiring? When it comes to putting a fresh spin on old tropes, all *Deliver Us From Evil* really has to offer is switching the usual elderly Irish priest for an unfeasibly





hunky Latin (Édgar Ramírez) with a junkie backstory.

It's a well-made film, and if you have a friend who's never seen a horror movie – or is seriously zoophobic – it will probably scare them out of their socks. And if you're steeped in this genre, it's a satisfactory way to pass an hour and a half. Only problem is, *Deliver Us From Evil* is nearly two hours long.

EXTRAS: Scott Derrickson provides an illuminating commentary in which he discusses such matters as casting and his view of the supernatural, points out in-jokes (a family called the Alberghettis are named after his agent),

and explains what was shot where and when. But his most intriguing insights concern the “sociopathic side” of best buddy Joel McHale; fans may be stunned to discover that the *Community* star has a fetish for knives, to the extent of spending \$6000 on one as a Christmas present for the director. Ho ho ho!

Buy the DVD and you get one featurette: overview piece “Illuminating Evil” (14 minutes). The Blu-ray (rated) adds three more: “Deliver Us From Demons” (eight minutes) focuses on prosthetics guy Mike Marino’s work, particularly the scarification on Marino’s body,

which involved over 150 different pieces. “The Two Sergeants” (eight minutes) discusses the relationship between Bana and the real Sarchie, who was on set throughout shooting. Finally, “The Demon Detective” (ten minutes) interviews Sarchie, discussing how he carries out his work, and revealing some surprisingly dogmatic views: “If you’re not worshipping God then you’re on the side of the Devil”, apparently. That’s us told. **Ian Berriman**

? An astonishing \$2 million was spent on the rights to use songs by The Doors. That’s 11% of the total production budget!

X-COPS

Sarchie isn't the only one policing the supernatural...



ABBIE MILLS Sleepy Hollow

► As one half of *Sleepy Hollow*’s Apocalypse-averting Witnesses, Abbie Mills spends more time involved in supernatural shenanigans than investigating liquor store robberies. Along with time-travelling Brit Ichabod Crane she’s stopped the Sandman, a succubus and has frequent run-ins with the Headless Horseman.

NICK BURKHARDT Grimm

► This Portland homicide detective belongs to a long line of Grimms, hunters who can perceive the supernatural creatures living amongst humanity. Handy when investigating cases involving “Wesens”, such as the werewolf-ish Blutbaden, ogre-like Siegbaste and porcine Bauerschwein.

PETER GRANT Rivers Of London

► The protagonist of Ben Aaronovitch’s novels is not only a police constable but also an apprentice wizard. He’s encountered everything from ghosts and water spirits to vampires and dryads.

WILLIAM KINDERMAN The Exorcist III

► In William Peter Blatty’s underrated 1990 sequel, George C Scott’s lieutenant investigates murders bearing the hallmark of a serial killer who was executed 15 years ago. He eventually discovers that the murderer’s soul escaped by possessing the body of Father Karras.

JOHN HOBBS Fallen

► Denzel Washington stars as a Philly cop on the trail of an apparent copycat killer; turns out that both sets of murders were the work of a body-hopping demon called Azazel.

The Strain Season One

Slipping some tongue

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: 15 December

2014 | 15 | 946 minutes | Blu-ray/DVD

Creators: Guillermo del Toro, Chuck Hogan

Cast: Corey Stoll, David Bradley, Mia Maestro, Kevin Durand, Sean Astin, Jonathan Hyde, Richard Sammel



GUILLERMO DEL

Toro has no truck with angst-ridden, romantic Byronic vampires. Mere fangs don't float his boat either.

If he'd been asked to direct a *Twilight* film, Edward Cullen would probably have looked like Nosferatu with a meat grinder for a mouth. In *Blade 2*, he gave us vampire hybrids that had monstrously-elongated maws. With *The Strain* – based on a book series he wrote with Chuck Hogan – the vamps have long prehensile tongues to do the sucking. And very disturbing they are too.

The bulk of the vampires in *The Strain* are like a virus, slowly turning New York into a dystopian nightmare of blood-sucking zombies. Combatting them are a motley team that includes a scientist from the Center for Disease Control (CDC), a laconic ratcatcher and a veteran vampire hunter. Their problems are exacerbated by the fact that an intelligent vampire elite – which has

inveigled its way into positions of power – is in control and coordinating the infestation, paving the way for domination.

It's not the most original show on TV, and suffers from some downright dull character building in the early episodes – it needs to establish that its lead is a workaholic, failing father in a couple of brief scenes, not over three episodes. It doesn't help that Corey Stoll, as CDC boffin "Eph" Goodweather, is a bland lead.

But it regularly serves up quite brilliant, full-on gore and horror, sometimes dripping in black humour, other times just incredibly intense. Kevin Durand gets the best lines as Vasily, the Rambo of vermin exterminators, while David Bradley is perfect as grizzled hunter Setrakian.

It's no *Walking Dead*; *The Strain* is strictly for horror fans, with limited crossover appeal. But if you like a bit of inventive yuck, it's *quality* inventive yuck.

EXTRAS: Three featurettes: "In the Beginning" (14 minutes); "A Novel Approach" (nine minutes), about adapting the books for TV; and "Setrakian's Lair" (nine minutes) in which actor David Bradley provides a tour of his character's lair.

Dave Golder



The Strain was originally planned as a TV series, not a book trilogy, but the network del Toro pitched it to wanted him to make it a comedy.



Some people struggle to let go of Halloween.

Hercules

Brawn before brains

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

2014 | 12 | 98 minutes | Blu-ray 3D/Blu-ray/DVD

Director: Brett Ratner

Cast: Dwayne Johnson, John Hurt, Ian McShane, Rufus Sewell, Ingrid Bolso Berdal, Askel Hennie, Reece Ritchie



AT A PIVOTAL

moment in this revisionist romp, Ian McShane's screw-loose seer asks Dwayne Johnson's

renowned strongman, "Are you only the legend? Or are you the truth behind the legend?" It's the final nail in the coffin following 90 minutes of merciless myth-busting. *Hercules* is a film that tries so hard to deconstruct the demi-god's legend that it loses every semblance of storytelling magic along the way.

Adapted from Steve Moore's five-issue comic series *Hercules: The Thracian Wars* (a better take on the

concept), Brett Ratner's film casts charismatic walking beef-sack Dwayne Johnson as a dour son of Zeus, who's not everything he's cracked up to be in the stories. With the support of his merry band of misfits, including Rufus Sewell's knife-thrower, Ingrid Bolso Berdal's Amazonian archer and his silver-tongued nephew (Reece Ritchie), tales of Hercules' fabled labours are blown wildly out of proportion to improve his reputation as a mercenary for hire, leading him to the employ of John Hurt's put-upon King Of Thrace.

On paper, Dwayne Johnson is perfect casting. In reality, his character is such a joyless slab that Johnson's natural showmanship is completely wasted. He is, quite literally, hired muscle. The supporting cast fare better – McShane has heaps of fun as the warrior with a death wish, while Askel Hennie's mad mute Tydeus shines. In the swords and sandals tradition, the evil ranks are littered with British character actors, including Peter Mullan's bone-whip-wielding bodyguard and Joseph Fiennes's duplicitous King Eurystheus. Neither are memorable.

Hercules had heard the Greek legend about where to get growth hormone.



Johnson's natural showmanship is completely wasted

Brett Ratner does a decent job with the large scale and mostly practical setpieces, but the tone is all over the place (an obligatory tragic backstory sits uneasily next to the goofy humour on display elsewhere) and it's such a charmless affair you'll come out wishing at least *some* part of the legend was real – even the bit about Hercules shovelling shit in the Augean Stables.

EXTRAS: On the DVD: commentary by Ratner and a producer, a five-minute intro and two instantly forgettable ten-minute featurettes on *Hercules*'s team and the effects. The Blu-ray (rated) adds 15 deleted scenes, and two further featurettes on weapons and a major action sequence.

Jordan Farley

Filming was delayed only a couple of weeks after Dwayne Johnson detached two pelvic muscles, resulting in triple hernia surgery.

Doctor Who Season Eight

The Year Of Living Dangerously

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

2014 | 12 | Blu-ray/DVD

Showrunner: Steven Moffat

Cast: Peter Capaldi, Jenna Coleman, Samuel Anderson, Michelle Gomez, Jenna Redgrave



IF ONE WORD

defines new *Who*'s eighth series, it's "risky". In many ways this is the most thrilling, unexpected year of TARDIS travel for quite some time, but nothing in it is easy, starting with the Doctor himself. Peter Capaldi's "grey-haired stick-insect" is a far more bristling, austere character than Matt Smith's bouncy Time Lord. He's Gregory House meets Malcolm Tucker, with a dash of Johnny Rotten. When he smiles, he's terrifying.

That you never know what this Doctor will do, that the words "timey-wimey" never pass his lips, that he can be both brutal and tender within the same scene are all huge positives. And yet, his constant spikiness occasionally grates. You yearn for him to give Clara an easier

time. Jenna Coleman, incidentally, is a revelation. Freed from the "impossible girl" baggage, Clara finally feels alive and real. It's her story this year.

The episodes themselves are mostly top tier, with only the daft "In The Forest Of The Night" and the deranged final act of "Kill The Moon" letting the side down. "Into The Dalek" worries at the Doctor's morality in a way that's more *Heart Of Darkness* (*Heart Of Dalekness?*) than the pitched *Die Hard In A Dalek*. "Dark Water" probes at the afterlife and its revelations are chilling. The season itself ends not on triumph, but with a series of lies.

If that all sounds awfully dour, then we should note that the season also contains the old-school adventure of "Mummy On The Orient Express" and, in "Flatline", the closest *Who* has come to a new "Blink". Then there's "Listen". Moffat's best script since "The Eleventh Hour", it manages to be creepy and moving while being, essentially, about a kid in a blanket and a knackered door. Series eight is

He can be both brutal and tender in the same scene

not without its wobbles, but as an attempt to inject surprise and danger back into *Who*, it's a huge success.

EXTRAS: The set contains the complete run of *Doctor Who Extra*. More interesting is *Earth Conquest*, a 45-minute feature nominally about a cast promotional tour but more focused on the creativity of fans. "Stop apologising for being brilliant," Capaldi says to an artist at one point. He really is the Doctor, isn't he?

The Ultimate Time Lord and *The Ultimate Companion* are two lengthy pieces of promo fluff first aired on BBC America. They should be rubbish, but Peter Davison is an inspired host, and the huge range of guests interviewed (Paul McGann, Moffat, and more) make these surprisingly good fun. Also enjoyable is the "Deep Breath" Q&A hosted by Zoe Ball, though there's little new info to be gleaned. The same can be said for the barrage of short two-minute featurettes (four of which are exclusive), which have almost nothing to say. Trailers are also included, as is the complete version of Foxes's cover of Queen.

There are four commentaries: "Into The Dalek" is good, with director Ben Wheatley and writer Phil Ford amiable companions; "The Caretaker" is also enjoyable, but "Robot Of Sherwood" and "Kill The Moon" are bland. "The science is complicated here," says director Paul Wilmshurst, of "Kill The Moon"'s ending. No shit.

There are also some irritating omissions. *Doctor Who Live* – Peter Capaldi's TV reveal – is absent, as is Strax's cinematic intro to "Deep Breath" (both are on the standalone "Deep Breath" disc, completists). There are no deleted scenes, so the beheading in "Robot Of Sherwood" and an additional Rustie scene from "Into The Dalek" remain on the cutting room floor. **Will Salmon**



The brief spaceship chase at the start of "The Caretaker" was filmed in the *Doctor Who* Experience exhibition.



The Congress

Drawn To Be Wild

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

2013 | 15 | Blu-ray/DVD

Director: Ari Folman

Cast: Robin Wright, Harvey Keitel, Jon Hamm, Danny Huston, Kodi Smit-McPhee, Paul Giamatti



IT'S TWO FILMS

for the price of one here, in *Waltz With Bashir* director Ari Folman's riff on Stanislaw Lem's *The Futurological Congress*. Sadly, they're of such wildly differing tone and quality that they make for uneasy bedfellows.

The live-action first act is the undoubted highlight, as the fictional actress Robin Wright (played by the real life actress Robin Wright) is offered the chance to sell all her image rights to a Hollywood studio – which is a frighteningly plausible future for the film industry. Things then get seriously weird as she travels to an entirely animated world – think *Who Drugged Roger Rabbit* – and notions of coherent storytelling get a little fuzzy.

Visually, *The Congress* is stunning, the inventive animation brimming with wit and surreal *Yellow Submarine* style. But it's incredibly self-indulgent – at two hours long it really outstays its welcome – and as a satire on Hollywood and big corporations, it has little new or thought-provoking to say.

EXTRAS: It's not a good sign when the trailer is longer than the *Making Of*, but at just 87 secs, the featurette here barely justifies the name – it's just director Ari Folman talking about a key scene. There are also breakdowns of four sequences showing the journey from shooting video references with the actors to completed animation – an intriguing process, so why don't we learn more about it on the disc?

Richard Edwards



The studio at the centre of the movie is called Miramax – a conjunction of real-life companies Miramax and Paramount.





He was about to find out how *The Bench Of Rejection* got its name.

Mood Indigo

Love and malady

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

2014 | 12 | Blu-ray/DVD

Director: Michel Gondry

Cast: Romain Duris, Audrey Tautou, Gad Elmaleh, Omar Sy, Aïssa Maïga



JAM-PACKED

with quirky details you'll probably miss first time round, Michel Gondry's fantasy romance is ideal for home viewing. Based on a 1947 novel by Boris Vian, it begins fluffy and sweet, as candy floss; then dark clouds of doom descend.

Romain Duris and Audrey Tautou are Colin and Chloe, a couple so cute you may want to slap them. He lives in a train carriage suspended between two buildings, surrounded by Heath Robinson-esque contraptions. A typical day involves touring the city in a cloud dangling from a crane, or dancing to jazz with impossibly bendy legs.

Then a water lily starts growing in Chloe's lung, and everything about their perfect world begins to decay.

More cynical souls may drown in its deluge of whimsy, and the tragedy lacks impact, since the characters lack substance; it's all too fanciful to be truly affecting. But Gondry's quicksilver imagination delivers so many delights that it's never less than diverting.

EXTRAS: "Behind Michel Gondry" (39 minutes) shows the director's working methods (improvisatory, chaotic) and character (control freakery, manic energy, impatience). A 21-minute featurette shows how various sequences were constructed. Plus four more featurettes (28 minutes), five deleted scenes, and more. The Blu-ray (rated) adds a Director's Cut that's 40 minutes longer! **Ian Berriman**

Michel Gondry also plays Chloe's doctor, because his first choice, '60s pop star Jacques Dutronc, was unavailable.



Staying admirably calm in the face of background lightsaber battles.

BLU-RAY DEBUT

Trancers

Band but not bad

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

1985 | 15 | Blu-ray

Director: Charles Band

Cast: Tim Thomerson, Helen Hunt, Michael Stefani



ON CHARLES

Band's CV, one directorial credit stands out: *Trancers*, a cult item so entertaining that it balances out the surrounding dreck like *Gingerdead Man Vs Evil Bong*.

It follows Jack Deth, a maverick cop from 23rd century LA, who leaps back into the body of an '80s forebear to pursue an evil mastermind intent on wiping out the future's ruling council by killing their ancestors. At Christmas.

The high-concept is pure *Terminator*. The look and sound – narration, electro score, red and blue neon – is low-rent *Blade*

Runner. Deth's trenchcoated character and the seedy downtown locations are hard-boiled noir. The tone is tongue in cheek. It's a combination which works surprisingly well.

Plus, there are amusing one-liners aplenty, and some cute gimmicks – like a digital watch which can stretch time. If only Band had directed five movies this good, instead of the 47 he actually has, he'd probably be as well-respected as Roger Corman.

EXTRAS: Commentary by Band and star Tim Thomerson; this could have done with a moderator, as they get sucked into watching the film instead of talking. A Making Of with Band and the writers (14 minutes) is more illuminating. *Trancers: City Of Lost Angels* (25 minutes) is one third of an anthology film shot in 1988, then lost until a workprint was found on VHS; by the same cast and crew, it's an interesting curio, if you can tolerate the rosey picture quality. Other bits and bobs won't detain you for long. **Ian Berriman**

One line – "Nice tan – very Christmassy" – was pinched from the Raymond Chandler film *The Lady In The Lake*.

ROUND-UP

SINBAD: THE FIFTH VOYAGE

Release Date: 22 December

2014 | 12 | Blu-ray/DVD



Persian-American Shahin Sean Solimon co-wrote, directed and stars in this labour of love, which, with its stopmotion animation, is very much a homage to the Ray Harryhausen *Sinbad* movies of the '50s and '70s. It sees the heroic sailor from *The Arabian Nights* going to the rescue of a sultan's daughter after she's kidnapped by an evil sorcerer. Along the way he encounters the likes of the Cyclops, a giant roc bird, and belly-dancing vampires. Sounds entertainingly campy, right? Unfortunately hammy acting, poor fight choreography and an annoying amount of flashbacks spoil the fun.

SPACE DANDY

SEASON ONE

Release Date: OUT NOW!

2014 | 12 | Blu-ray/DVD



This anime spoof space opera is from Shinichiro Watanabe, best known for his action-noir SF show *Cowboy Bebop*, though *Dandy's* a featherweight in comparison. It features a trio of thinly-sketched space adventurers: the titular character, a strutting dandy with a giant pompadour hairdo, plus a slobby cat-alien and a fussy droid. Whimsical adventures abound. The show gradually finds its feet with a witty zombie episode, an exciting robot revolt and a tribute to the trippy Euro classic *Fantastic Planet*. Intermittent fun, but thoroughly disposable.

STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION

SEASON SEVEN

Release Date: 15 December

1993-1994 | PG | Blu-ray



The HD reissues draw to a close, with the last 26 episodes. The series doesn't exactly go out on a high, but the concluding two-parter is a fitting farewell, and there a handful of strong episodes – like "Parallels", in which Worf hops between alternate realities. New extras include a three-part documentary (89 minutes), two "In Conversation" discussions involving production crew, 23 deleted scenes, and a five-minute gag reel. A complete series box set is released on the same date.

UNDER THE DOME

SEASON TWO

Release Date: 29 December

2014 | 15 | DVD



So the townsfolk of Chester's Mill are still stuck under an invisible dome, acting exactly the opposite to how you'd expect folk stuck under an invisible dome would do... This season it's "freak event of the week", more questions about the Dome's original purpose, an escape which proves totally unexciting, the revelation that only about five people in the outside world care about the Dome, lots of dull squabbling, and would-be town patriarch "Big Jim" pretending to be nice, but going nasty whenever the plot flags. What a waste of a good idea.

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BLU-RAY DEBUT

Battlestar Galactica

The rag-tag fleet arrives in high-def

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

1978-1980 | PG | Blu-ray

Creator: Glen A Larson

Cast: Richard Hatch, Dirk Benedict, Lorne Greene, John Colicos



IF YOU COME TO THE original *Galactica* having only seen the gritty noughties remake, you're in for quite a surprise. *BSG* '70s-style is a much more family-orientated show. Space opera often slides into soap opera and there's little sense that these people are traumatised holocaust survivors.

But the series still stands up surprisingly well, especially multi-partners like the opening "Saga Of A Star World"; "The Living Legend", in which *Galactica* meets another *Battlestar*; and "War Of The Gods", guest-starring *The Avengers'* Patrick Macnee as a mesmeric alien who turns out to be Satan. Indeed, the fact that *BSG* '70s has aliens – some wonderfully outlandish – is one of its great strengths. John Colicos's deliciously high camp portrayal of the treacherous Baltar is another.

Unfortunately *Galactica* 1980 – also included here – brings down the average. Set 30 years later, after Earth's been found, this silly, short-lived spin-off features flying motorbikes, invisibility bracelets and kids who (thanks to Earth's lower gravity) can leap into trees. It's a guilty pleasure for a while, but the cheesy lunacy and corny humour soon feel downright embarrassing.

EXTRAS: Disappointingly, nothing new – all stem from the 2004 DVD. Still, they're good. Richard Hatch, Dirk Benedict and Herb Jefferson Jr talk over the opening three-parter. An excellent 45-minute doc features priceless out-takes including the chimp inside robot dog Muffit chattering away, and Hatch and Benedict receiving wedgies. There are also interviews with creator Glen A Larson and composer Stu Phillips (11 minutes), featurettes on the Cylons and Muffit (10 minutes), and deleted scenes. Picture quality dips noticeably during effects sequences, but is generally sharp.

Ian Berriman

❓ Noah Hathaway, then six, recalls being given beer one lunchtime, and forgetting his lines in the afternoon...

Human skin was much more glossy in the '70s.



BLU-RAY DEBUT

The Vampire Lovers

Sapphic violence

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

1970 | 15 | Blu-ray

Director: Roy Ward Baker

Cast: Ingrid Pitt, Madeline Smith, Kate O'Mara, George Cole, Peter Cushing



SEX WAS ALWAYS a key ingredient of Hammer horror, from the moment Christopher Lee's Dracula swept down

the stairs of his castle, setting female pulses racing. But as the studio entered the more permissive '70s, the two-backed beast increasingly eclipsed the befanged bloodsucker.

Based on Sheridan Le Fanu's 1871 tale "Carmilla", *The Vampire Lovers* pushes a lesbian subtext to the fore, then strips it bare. Ingrid Pitt is the vamp who insinuates herself into aristocratic homes to prey on young women. At 32, the Polish actress is visibly far too old for the role, but has an undeniable magnetism.

Moments of visual poetry – Pitt waltzing through a misty graveyard



Her mime *Hamlet* needed more work.

in a diaphanous gown – aside, it's a little plodding. Lose the titillation and it's basically an extended wait for the family patriarchs to wisp. Though tame by today's standards, once you know quite how naïve young actress Madeline Smith was, certain scenes are uncomfortable viewing; this is exploitation cinema in more ways than one.

EXTRAS: Hammer mavens Marcus Hearn and Jonathan Rigby provide informative, good-humoured commentary. Other experts join them on featurette "New Blood" (25 minutes), which explains what a watershed film this was for Hammer. Plus: trailer, gallery, restoration comparison. Cleaned up frame-by-frame, this new transfer looks immaculate. Ian Berriman

❓ Stately home exteriors were shot at the clubhouse of a Rickmansworth golf course. Their tennis courts are clearly visible!

BLU-RAY DEBUT

Kiss Of The Vampire

Monsters' Ball

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

1963 | 12 | Blu-ray

Director: Don Sharp

Cast: Clifford Evans, Edward de Souza, Jennifer Daniel

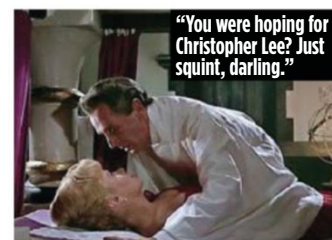


IT MAY BE SHORT on marquee power – no Christopher Lee, no Peter Cushing – but *Kiss Of The Vampire* almost

persuades you it's business as usual in the kingdom of Hammer, that unlocatable corner of Europe where the undead rise with style and rustics tell foolish tourists, "No one ever comes in there, sir!"

From a certain angle, chief vampire Noel Willman looks uncannily like Lee's lighting double, summoned from the subs bench. But lift the tomb lid and something more interesting lurks.

Our heroes are honeymooners, offered an unsettling choice of Bavarian hospitality: a permanently empty hotel owned by a creepy old



"You were hoping for Christopher Lee? Just squint, darling."

couple and a sinister chateau filled with caged birds and baroque statues, inhabited by a well-mannered brood of bloodsuckers. As English as crumpets, they attend a masked ball that plays like a proto *Eyes Wide Shut*, one censor's decision away from an orgy. Soon the film settles into its true groove, a Satanic fable more Dennis Wheatley than Bram Stoker.

The lurid Eastmancolor visuals occasionally feel at odds with the story's sense of pre-Profumo restraint. But this clash of the sensual and uptight proves perfect for such a chastely powerful *Kiss*.

EXTRAS: A new commentary with stars Edward de Souza and Jennifer Daniel, a trailer and a gallery.

Nick Setchfield

❓ The opening scene and the bat-attack climax were repurposed from drafts of 1960's *The Brides Of Dracula*.

★ **SAVE UP TO 57%** ★

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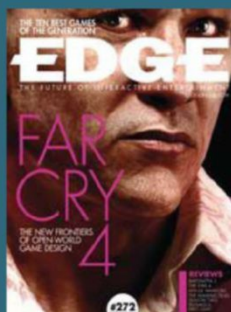
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Resurrection

Season One

Yawn Of The Dead

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

2013 | 12 | DVD

Director: Charles McDougall

Cast: Omar Epps, Kurtwood Smith, Frances Fisher, Devin Kelley, Mark Hildreth, Samaira Armstrong



PEN HANDY? YOU

might need to take notes here. *Resurrection* is the US TV adaptation of Jason Mott's 2013 novel, *The Returned*. That novel

has nothing to do with the ace French show *Les Revenants* (screened in the UK as *The Returned*, confusingly). It does, however, have a near-identical premise in which residents of an isolated town find their deceased loved ones mysteriously returned to life and full health. Got that? Good.

Season one's eight episodes hone in on three of these returnees:

eight-year-old Jacob, creepy criminal Caleb and Rachel, the local pastor's ex. This narrow focus allows the show to explore the fraught emotions of loved ones who had previously come to terms with their grief. Kurtwood Smith as Jacob's father is particularly strong in this regard, oscillating between angry disbelief and cautious joy.

Still, it's impossible to get That Other Show out of your mind. *Les Revenants* wasn't just gripping and strange – it looked amazing too, with a real sense of place. *Resurrection*, in comparison, feels like something you'd find on the Hallmark Channel. It's visually flat and saddled with a tear-jerky score. Characters do bewilderingly stupid things and say lines like, "It's over." "No, it's only just beginning," with a straight face.



"Oh no.... I think your head lice have been resurrected too."

Critically, it never feels like it's quite comfortable with its genre elements, and takes frequent drunken lurches towards soap opera territory.

And yet... the mysteries posed are compelling. Effort is made to give everyone a few shades of grey (the Sheriff, in particular, alternates between being the heart of the show and its biggest dickhead). There's potential here, but also the nagging doubt that *Resurrection* could just be the next in a long line of unfulfilling shows that don't deliver on their

initial promise (Oh, hi *FlashForward*).

EXTRAS: A slim selection. "On Location In Georgia" takes us behind the scenes of the season's filming in Doncast- no, sorry, Georgia.

"Resurrection: Building A Mystery" quizzes the cast on where they think the story might be heading. There's also six minutes of deleted scenes and a brief blooper reel.

Will Salmon

Jason Mott was inspired to write the original novel by a dream about finding his dead mother sitting at the kitchen table.

Sin City: A Dame To Kill For

Feels over familiar, Frankly

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: 15 December

2014 | 18 | Blu-ray 3D/Blu-ray/DVD

Directors: Robert Rodriguez, Frank Miller

Cast: Eva Green, Mickey Rourke, Joseph Gordon-Levitt, Josh Brolin

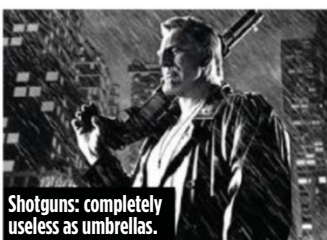


THERE'S A

sweet spot with the timing of sequels. Rush them out and the crowd cries, "Cash in!" Leave it too long and the initial buzz is DOA.

Sin City's sequel arrives just too soon for nostalgia, just too late for heat. Its predecessor had novelty on its side, a thrillingly fresh way of transforming comic book graphics into cinematic spectacle. But *A Dame To Kill For* feels instantly familiar, in thrall to the original's visual style. And reheated dazzle just ain't the same.

We're back inside Frank Miller's skull, a rain-lashed realm where men are men and women are a feminist protest in waiting. The narrative attempts to whip together



Shotguns: completely useless as umbrellas.

four loosely connected tales of ultra-steroidal noir. You could call it a portmanteau but the film would punch you in the teeth for being high-falutin'. Eva Green is the femme fatale of the title story, all shadow-drenched breasts and glimmers of psychosis, while Josh Brolin brings soul to luckless shutterbug Dwight.

As stylised as Noh theatre, *A Dame To Kill For* often feels like a procession of freeze-dried cool and airless erotica. But there's an undeniable pulp energy here, for all that it's "Just another Saturday night" in the old town.

EXTRAS: Four character profiles (13 minutes); featurettes on the make-up effects and stunts (12 minutes). **Nick Setchfield**

Look out for cameos by Frank Miller and Robert Rodriguez; both play tramps on a television show.

BLU-RAY DEBUT

The Thief Of Bagdad

Silent swashbuckling spectacle

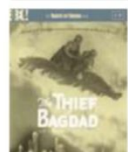
★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

1924 | U | Dual-format Blu-ray & DVD

Director: Raoul Walsh

Cast: Douglas Fairbanks, Julianne Johnston, Smilg Edwards, Sojin Kamiyama, Charles Belcher, Anna May Wong



ONCE UPON A time it seemed that every generation would have its own film adaptation of *Arabian Nights* tale

The Thief Of Bagdad. Sadly, that tradition petered out in the mid '70s, but we were left with a couple of classics. The lavish 1940 Alexander Korda-produced version remains the most famous, but the first – produced by, co-written by and starring the swashbuckler's swashbuckler, Douglas Fairbanks – remains the most fascinating.

One of the most expensive and lavish films of the '20s, this was in every sense a blockbuster and a star vehicle. The story of a thief competing with princes to win the



In truth, she thought the necklace was overdoing it.

hand of a princess, it's packed with spectacle and special effects. Dated, of course, but some of those hand-crafted effects still have undeniable charm, and the massive set and masses of extras are a genuinely awesome sight.

The best special effect, though, is Fairbanks himself, who almost pirouettes through an immensely physical and stunt-packed role. He's star charisma personified.

The Thief Of Bagdad is overlong, overindulgent in places and bears the scars of the era's casual racism, but thanks to Fairbanks, it's still fun.

EXTRAS: A commentary by film historian Jeffrey Vance; a 17-minute "video essay" (behind-the-scenes photos with captions, basically); a 40-page booklet. **Dave Golder**

The fake tattoo that Fairbanks had on his arm for this role – of a triangle and a crescent – became his personal emblem.

BLU-RAY DEBUT

Spirited Away

Sen-sational



"You mean this isn't Alton Towers?"

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

2001 | PG | Dual-format Blu-ray & DVD

Director: Hayao Miyazaki

Cast: Daveigh Chase, Jason Marsden, Suzanne Pleshette, Michael Chiklis, Lauren Holly



SAVING THE best for last, *Spirited Away* is the final Miyazaki movie to receive a Blu-ray makeover. Long

overdue it may be, but if any Ghibli film was worth the wait it's their 2001 masterpiece – one of the all-time great animations.

In the midst of moving, stubborn scaredy cat Chihiro and her parents happen across an abandoned theme park. After ma and pa are turned into pigs Chihiro finds herself trapped in a strange spirit world, where she's made to work in a towering bathhouse for shapeshifting witch Yubaba (and given the name Sen), all the while searching for a way home.

Beautifully written, animated and acted, this is a breathtakingly imaginative and utterly beguiling

experience. It's epic in scope, but deeply personal in nature. At its heart are the relationships Chihiro forms and her transformative journey of self-discovery. It's got depth that few live-action films, let alone animated ones, can boast.

Uncompromisingly weird and wonderful, *Spirited Away* is movie-making magic. But you probably don't need us to tell you that. If you *haven't* seen it already, what are you waiting for?

EXTRAS: Aside from a lovely HD transfer there's nothing new to this Blu-ray if you own the DVD, just storyboards, a 48-minute Making Of, an intro by John Lasseter, a behind-the-mic featurette and a two-minute conversation with Miyazaki. **Jordan Farley**

Spirited Away is also part of an 11-film Hayao Miyazaki Collection box set, which adds a 90-minute bonus disc.

Patema Inverted

Love has its ups and downs



Love making was a complicated task.

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

2013 | PG | Dual-format Blu-ray & DVD (Standard Edition/Collector's Edition/Ultimate Edition)

Director: Yoshihiro Yoshiura

Cast: Yukiyo Fujii, Nobuhiko Okamoto, Shintarō Oohata, Shinya Fukumatsu, Masayuki Kato



GHIBLI DOESN'T have exclusive rights to charming anime fairy tales with worldwide crossover appeal. While the dull

2012 French film *Upside Down* completely fudged the enticing concept of a girl from one world falling in love with a boy from another where everything is the other way up, *Patema Inverted* has much more fun with the idea, and delivers some simply breathtaking visuals in the process.

Patema lives in a dark, cramped underground world. On the surface is the Orwellian totalitarian state of Eija. The problem is, gravity works in opposite directions to the people of each world, so when Patema accidentally enters Eija, she risks "falling" into the sky. And the leader of Eija is not happy with an "invert"

infecting his perfect society...

It's a simple tale, well-told with wit, invention and visual magic. You don't need to be an anime fan to love *Patema Inverted*, just someone with a sense of wonder.

EXTRAS: A massive amount on all three editions, including an excitable commentary by the original Japanese cast (in Japanese with subtitles), various cast and director interviews (from two to 13 minutes), trailers and – amusingly, but somewhat pointlessly – 27 minutes of the film shown upside down so you can see what it looks like from Patema's point of view! The more expensive editions add in chunky booklets and exclusive packaging and art.

Dave Golder

The chatter of voices heard during the opening credits is spoken in the constructed language Esperanto.

Bayonetta: Bloody Fate

The mane event

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

2013 | 15 | Blu-ray/DVD

Director: Fuminori Kizaki

Cast: Hellena Taylor, Grey DeLisle, Dave Fennoy, Yuri Lowenthal



CALL OFF THE search party, put the bloodhound back on its leash, we've found it! The first, honest-to-goodness great videogame movie. Okay, it's an anime, which probably doesn't count, but *Bayonetta: Bloody Fate* is the best feature-length game adaptation to date.

It retells the first game's barmy tale. Armed with demonic hair and heels to die for (literally – they've got guns attached to them) Bayonetta is an Umbra Witch, caught in the middle of a centuries-old war between her kind and the Lumen Sages. She's also lost her memory and has no idea why the Sages' angelic assassins seem so hell-bent on capturing her, or who this Jubileus chap is...



Don't get on the wrong side of that hair.

Bloody Fate omits occasional locations and characters but otherwise does an impressive job of streamlining the game's story. The tone's spot-on too, with outrageous fan service shots of Bayonetta half naked, ludicrously over-the-top action sequences and a bouncy bubblegum pop soundtrack.

It's a less charming introduction to Bayonetta's bonkers world than the game was, meaning anyone new to Wicked Weaves and Umbran Climaxes may struggle to see the appeal, but it's hard to imagine fans of the franchise won't be won over. **EXTRAS:** Commentary by the English language voice director and Hellena Taylor (voice of Bayonetta), storyboards and a trailer. **Jordan Farley**

The Japanese voice cast for *Bloody Fate* were so popular with fans they were used in the Japanese version of *Bayonetta 2*.

Ghost In The Shell: Arise Borders 1 & 2

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

2013 | 15 | Blu-ray/DVD



AFTER THE *Ghost In The Shell* films and *Stand Alone Complex* TV series, now there's *Arise*, a four-part reimagining that's straight-to-disc (two episodes – or "Borders" – at a time).

It's a prequel, showing the creation of Team Kusanagi, with US TV-style pacing. It looks magnificent, giving cyberpunk a whole new vibrant aesthetic and delivering pulse-pounding action.

Sadly the plotting is damned near inscrutable, with ill-defined characters and huge amounts of exposition. This improves with *Borders 3 & 4*, but these first two are very hard work indeed.

EXTRAS: Cast and crew interviews; US cast commentary on ep 2; two animated shorts; textless opening credits; trailers. **Dave Golder**

Out Of This World

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

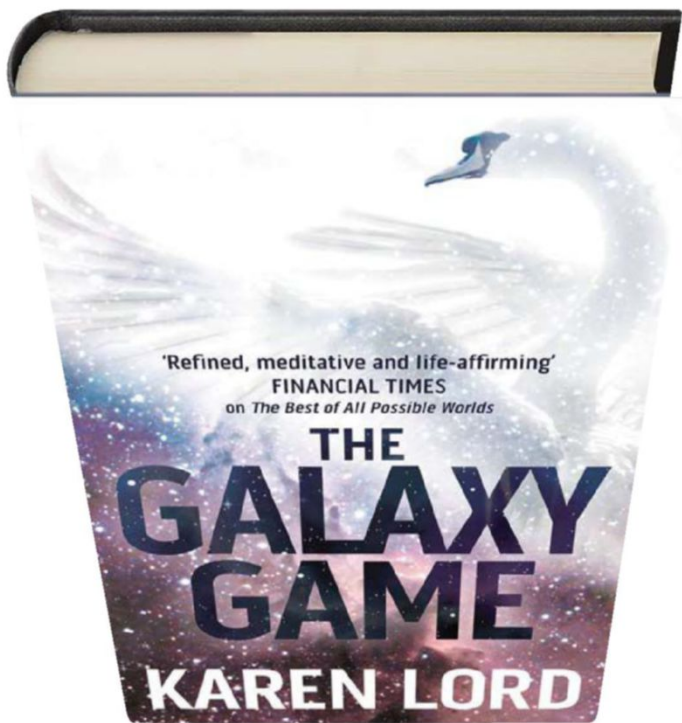
1962 | PG | DVD

**DOCTOR WHO**

isn't the only show to have taken a bullet in the archive. Here's the sole surviving episode of an early '60s ABC anthology series, created with the aim of bringing the masters of SF literature to the masses.

"Little Lost Robot" adapts a short story by Isaac Asimov, and while its shambling, vacuum-formed droids appear to have lurched out of a cheapjack matinee serial its examination of AI morality remains intriguing, even as its monochrome future world fossilises into retro charm.

EXTRAS: An alternative VidFIREd version; commentary with producer Leonard White and fan Mark Ward; audios of missing episodes "Cold Equations" and "Impostor" (by Dalek creator Terry Nation); downloadable script of John Wyndham adaptation "Dumb Martian"; illustrated booklet. **Nick Setchfield**



The Galaxy Game

Too much rulebook, not enough gameplay



Release Date: 1 January

352 pages | Hardback/ebook

Author: Karen Lord

Publisher: Jo Fletcher Books

IT'S MORE THAN A LITTLE

tempting to describe Barbadian author Karen Lord's latest as her difficult second album. *The Galaxy Game* may be her third novel, rather than her second, but it's her first sequel, and it has the feel of a book struggling to make the transition onto a bigger canvas and deal with readers' greater expectations.

The story's primary focus is Rafi, teenage nephew of linguist and diplomat Grace Delarua, the heroine of Lord's previous novel *The Best Of All Possible Worlds* (2013). Rafi is a boy with, it's fair to say, some tough issues to overcome. For many years, Rafi's telepathic father used his psionic abilities to abuse his family; while the father's now out of the picture, Rafi's inheritance of his old man's powers means he's viewed with unease and suspicion by both his surviving family and the government of his home world, Cygnus Beta. As the novel opens,

Rafi has been shipped off to a boarding school for children with unruly talents of various sorts, a place where he can be more closely monitored and controlled. We follow Rafi's efforts to claw back some freedom, deal with his father's legacy and learn to play the gravity-defying game of Wallrunning, all against a backdrop of interplanetary politicking and the looming threat of warfare over a trade dispute.

The combination is not an entirely satisfying one. The problem stems from the choice of focus: Lord makes big events play second fiddle to a coming-of-age tale. She did a similar thing in *The Best Of All Possible Worlds*, where the unexpected focus was both the point and the appeal: the earlier volume was explicitly about a people coming to terms with a world-changing event, and trying to rebuild themselves and their culture in the ruins that remained, rather than about the event itself. *Game*, meanwhile, is interested in the way older generations' actions echo down through the lives of the younger, shaping who they are and

what possibilities are open to them – the effects of parents on their children, teachers on their students, political leaders on their successors – and so concentrating on the people growing up in a transformed world, rather than the ones who transformed it, makes plenty of thematic sense.

Unfortunately, the technique doesn't work as well the second time round. As with *Worlds*, the pacing of *Game* is uneven and the structure sometimes frustrating in its habit of cutting away from what, in other novels, would be key emotional moments and plot developments. But where these things were forgivable in the previous novel because Grace's story was endlessly inventive, in *Game* what is foregrounded at the expense of the big events simply isn't as absorbing: Rafi as a character isn't compelling enough to carry things on his own. Rather more interesting is his schoolfriend (and the novel's occasional narrator) Ntenman, a self-aware and wryly funny misfit teen with his own father issues. The novel comes to life whenever he's speaking to the reader.

Lord's world-building is richly and carefully imaginative. She grounds the various cultures in the ways that custom and worldview shape people's daily interactions,

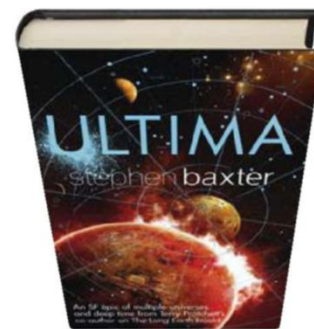
Lord's world-building is richly imaginative

giving the places Rafi encounters on his travels a sense of heft and history that's sometimes lacking elsewhere in the genre. The bulk of the novel is set in Punartam, whose elaborate systems of social and kinship networks Rafi must navigate. But there's a lot of reliance on infodumping, rather than details being organically discovered through Rafi's story.

In her past work, Lord has set high standards for herself. After the anarchic delights of her Crawford Award-winning debut novel *Redemption In Indigo* (2012) and the thoughtful comedy of manners and culture clash of *The Best Of All Possible Worlds*, *The Galaxy Game* is, unfortunately, a disappointment.

Nic Clarke

Lord has a PhD in the sociology of religion from Bangor University; no wonder her worldbuilding has weight.



Ultima

Signs of the end times



Release Date: OUT NOW!

550 pages | Hardback/ebook

Author: Stephen Baxter

Publisher: Gollancz

COSMOLOGY, ALTERNATE

worlds within a multiverse of possibilities and lots of alternate history... Arguably, Stephen Baxter's *Ultima*, the sequel to last year's *Proxima*, slams together all of the author's recurring fictional obsessions.

This is no bad thing. It is, after all, not just a novel about the end of the world, but the end of *all* worlds, as seen from the perspective of a motley bunch of travellers who are buffeted around the multiverse as they're caught up in events they hardly understand, events orchestrated by a network of vast minds.

If that sounds rather abstract, then rest assured there's much of the Golden Age fantastic adventure here too, as Baxter shows us Roman legionnaires in space, and imagines what might happen if the Incas had survived and prospered to eventually get off-planet.

If the novel darkens towards the end, as our heroes learn just why they keep getting chucked around the universe, this is a necessary change in tone. Less necessary perhaps is the sheer amount of exposition at the end of the book, much of it delivered by the likeably monstrous Earthshine, an AI created from human intelligences.

Nonetheless, as with its predecessor, this is a hard SF novel that battles bravely with big ideas. With every passing year, the oft-made remark that Baxter is Arthur C Clarke's heir seems more and more apt.

Jonathan Wright

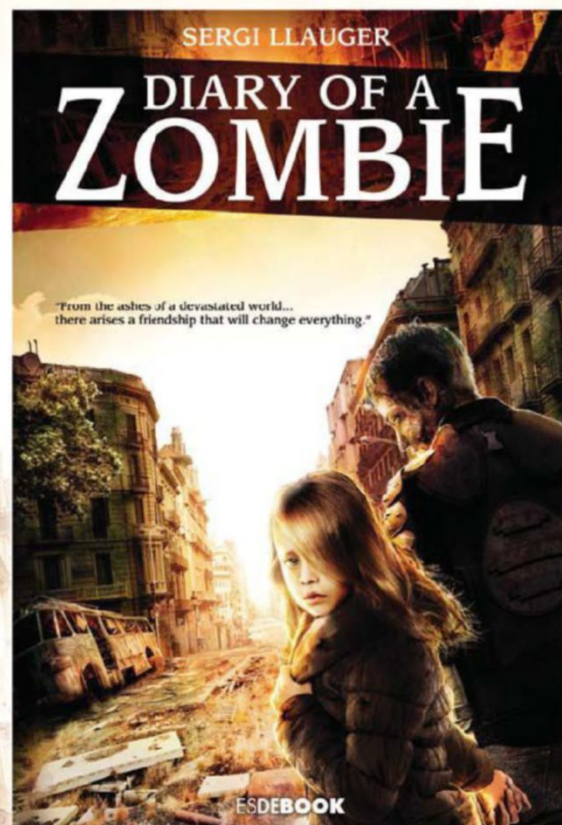
Next for Baxter: *The Long Utopia*, volume four in his *Long Earth* sequence with Terry Pratchett; it's due in June.

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Hansel & Gretel

Cannibalism for kids

★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

56 pages | Hardback

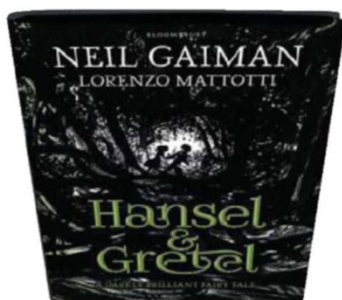
Author: Neil Gaiman

Publisher: Bloomsbury Children's

EARLIER THIS YEAR, NEIL

Gaiman visited the Syrian refugee camps in Jordan and wrote about his experiences there. His visits created awareness, raised money and obviously affected him a great deal – and also helped inspire his latest illustrated story. Because wars and famine and terrible choices aren't just confined to fairytales. "Talking to the Syrian refugees who ran out of food... getting permission from their Imams to eat cats and dogs because all the other animals had gone, eating grass, drinking swamp water, and I'm going, this, this is Hansel and Gretel now."

You know the story: a woodcutter and his wife abandon their children in the woods rather than see the whole family starve. With their trail of breadcrumbs eaten by birds, Hansel and Gretel stumble upon a gingerbread house where they're greeted by a friendly old woman...



So nothing new here – this is Gaiman's telling of the classic story, not a different version of it. But it's the little things that set the tone for a compelling, devastating edition. The reasons behind the situation, the war that led to famine and such dreadful choices. The fact that it's not an evil stepmother, but the children's own mother who insists the siblings must be abandoned. The dramatic illustrations by Lorenzo Mattotti, somewhere between woodcuts and shadows in the fire. They all combine to make an absorbing, terrifying fairytale that's still relevant today.

Rhian Drinkwater

The original tale is believed to have come from the Great Famine of 1315, which killed millions and led to reports of cannibalism.

The Secret History of Wonder Woman

Secret origins, original secrets

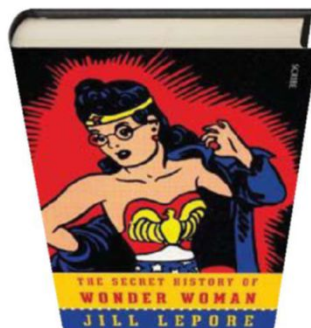
★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

448 pages | Hardback

Author: Jill Lepore

Publisher: Scribner



IT WAS NO SECRET TO DC'S

editors that Wonder Woman was disconcertingly kinky; fan letters from bondage fetishists only confirmed it. No secret either that her creator, William Moulton Marston, meant her to be not just a female hero but a feminist one. The secrets uncovered here explain why.

Marston's life revolved around secrets and deception. He had four children by two women, and they all lived together under one roof. One of the women, Olive Byrne, was related to great suffragists of the early 1900s, and wore "slave bracelets" that inspired Wonder Woman's. This book traces the roots of the mythos in feminist imagery and concepts, as well as identifying some very specific sources in earlier works, as well as events and people in Marston's life.

It also recounts Marston's checkered career as an academic psychologist, lawyer and writer, and his impact in all these fields. He promoted himself as "inventor of the lie detector" (deception again), which was half-true – his efforts helped popularise the device – but the book also discovers his role in the landmark case which ruled that lie detector evidence was inadmissible in US courts.

Seamlessly combining rigorous scholarship and riveting readability, this richly rewarding book illuminates the histories of a problematic comics icon.

A must-read. **Alex Summersby**

Marston chose HG Peter to draw Wonder Woman, possibly because he'd drawn pro-suffrage cartoons in Judge magazine.

Inside HBO's Game Of Thrones Seasons 3 & 4

Weaving Westeros



Release Date: OUT NOW!

192 pages | Hardback

Author: CA Taylor

Publisher: Gollancz

THE BEST GENRE SHOW ON

TV deserves an equally lavish and detailed companion book. Volume two of CA Taylor's official guide satisfies on the first point... but not so much on the second.

It's immediately clear that Taylor has had access to everyone, from George RR Martin to the show's embroiderers. Great. But the anecdotal format means that you rarely get much insight into topics. Standout character Oberyn has just



a couple of picture-led pages devoted to him. Story-shaking events such as the Red Wedding fare better, but it's still surface level stuff, with a handful of quotes from cast and crew. Wonderful though the title sequence is, we didn't need another explanation of how it was made. The chapters recapping the history of the different factions are better, providing useful insights for viewers who may not have investigated the original novels.



Days of filming in the snow had taken their toll.

That said, it is an undeniably gorgeous object. As with the first volume, it's bound in a tactile padded cover. Inside, it's big picture heaven, making it ideal for taking to cons to get signed by your favourite Wildling or Night's Watchman. It's a fun book to flick through. It's just a shame, given all the talent involved, that it doesn't go deeper. **Will Salmon**

President Obama is a *Game Of Thrones* fan. The Commander-In-Chief requests to see the show in advance of its airing.



The Wall looks greener than we remember.

Time And Time Again

Remaking history



Release Date: OUT NOW!

384 pages | Hardback/ebook

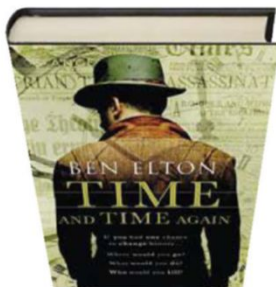
Author: Ben Elton

Publisher: Bantam Press

AS CO-WRITER OF TV

classic *Blackadder Goes Forth*, comic-turned-author Ben Elton would seem like a natural fit for a story based around the events that set off World War One. Throw time travel and changing history into the mix, however, and things don't seem quite as certain, with Elton's latest novel proving to be an odd and haphazard tale that mixes interesting ideas with some deeply clunky execution.

The story follows Hugh Stanton, an ex-soldier turned "professional adventurer" in 2024 who's recently lost his family, and is enlisted by a gang of Cambridge intellectuals for a daring mission. They've discovered a way for someone to travel back over a hundred years, to 1914 – and their plan is for Hugh to foil the events that set off the Great



War, thus hopefully rebooting the 20th century along much more peaceful lines.

Naturally, things don't go according to plan, although with Elton aiming this novel firmly at mainstream readers, the emphasis is largely on general historical suspense and intrigue, with only a small dash of genuine sci-fi in the mix. There are evocative details and some decent setpieces in here, but Elton's clumsy writing style favours purple prose and broad caricatures. Despite a late burst of full-on SF concepts, *Time And Time Again* is stuck with a tone of pompous lecturing that ends up more annoying than engrossing.

Saxon Bullock

Both Elton's grandfathers fought in WWI – but on opposite sides. His paternal grandfather was awarded the Iron Cross.

Dead But Not Forgotten

Professional Sookie fanfic



Release Date: OUT NOW!

352 pages | Hardback/ebook

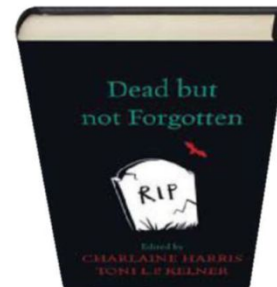
Editors: Charlaune Harris and Toni LP Kelner

Publisher: Gollancz

IT'S EXTREMELY UNUSUAL

for a professional writer to allow any other authors to write about their characters, let alone a group of authors, making this book of 15 Charlaune Harris-approved short stories set in the world of the *Southern Vampire Mysteries* pretty much unique.

The roster of contributors includes a couple of well-known names: Rachel Caine and Seanan McGuire are probably the biggest. Each author has taken a character from the Sookieverse and written about them, and in general the more obscure the character, the better the story. Possibly because the reader knows very little about those characters, the writers have had to come up with actual stories for them with complete beginnings, middles and endings.



Leigh Ferry's "The Real Santa Claus", about half-demon Diantha, captures the character as she is in Harris's books and has fun with her ensuring that Sam and Sookie have a happy Christmas. Rachel Caine's "Nobody's Business" focuses on the developing relationship between Kevin and Kenya, the two human cops who patrol Bon Temps. However, the stories about the vampires tend to be pretty dreadful, particularly the final one in the volume, a years-later vignette that rivals the last chapter of *Harry Potter And The Deathly Hallows* for appalling mawkishness as Eric mopes around Sookie's descendants. All in all, a mixed bag.

Miriam McDonald

Other writers featured in the collection include Christopher Golden, Nancy Holder, Jonathan Maberry and Suzanne MacLeod.

Legacies Of Betrayal

Horus Heresy hors d'oeuvres



Release Date: 13 December

416 pages | Hardback/ebook

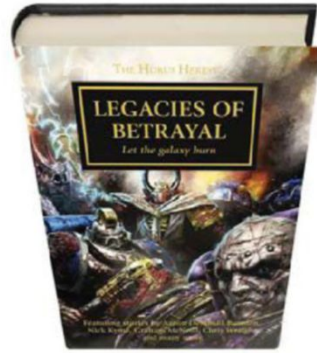
Authors: Various

Publisher: The Black Library

WARHAMMER STORIES ARE

not known for their brevity: the Horus Heresy series, of which *Legacies Of Betrayal* is volume 31, is now roughly 3.2 million words long. So this anthology of nineteen shorter tales from the 40th millennium gives some of the franchise's finest writers a chance to show off their mad skillz. And they do not disappoint.

Fan favourite Gav Thorpe provides three stories, including "The Divine Word", a spectacular widescreen battle sequence that reaches from command ships in space to the gritty frontline of the fight. "Butcher's Nails" is a remarkably brutal tale of psychosurgery by Aaron Dembski-Bowden, and another notch on the kill list of this talented young writer. Chris Wraight's novella "Brotherhood Of



The Storm" will please many fans, who always enjoy a look at lesser-known Warhammer armies like the White Scars legion. But the best of the bunch is "Warmaster" by John French, which as the title suggests takes readers deep into the mind and motivations of Warmaster Horus before his fall.

With other quality stories from Guy Haley and David Annandale, it's hard to fault *Legacies Of Betrayal's* scope. And as a taste of the many facets of the 40k universe, it's an anthology ideal for new readers who want to try the Warhammer experience. **Damien Walter**

The anthology's roster of writers also includes Nick Kyme, Graham McNeill, Anthony Reynolds and Chris Wraight.

Goodhouse

Damned by DNA



Release Date: 1 January

336 pages | Hardback/ebook

Author: Peyton Marshall

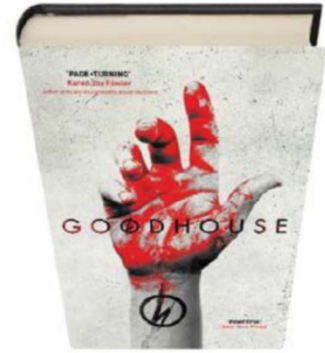
Publisher: Transworld

A DYSTOPIAN YA THRILLER

with a romantic edge; it's safe to say that Peyton Marshall's thriller *Goodhouse* ticks all the boxes for Current Teen Thing. The central question: if in the not-so-distant future we can uncover a criminal gene, should we lock up the pre-criminals so that they can never cause harm?

Our hero James is just such an institution boy, struggling to convey his worth to a world that's already decided he is a monster. Though he has no idea of his original name, parents, or what crimes they – or indeed he – are supposed to have committed, he's forced to pay his dues along with thousands of other boys, none of whom want to play nice.

But though he can't trust his apparently criminally-leaning comrades, that's nothing compared to his suspicion of those who



actually run the Goodhouse institutes. And since James's first school was burnt down by a cult bent on eliminating boys like him altogether, he's got a lot of enemies to juggle. Then, of course, there's this girl...

Goodhouse is good fun – *Minority Report* meets *Never Let Me Go*, with all the fallout you might expect. The story bashes along, fast-paced and occasionally brutal; but it all feels a little like another Orwell cut-out. Without originality on its side, unfortunately it never quite graduates from good to great.

Natasha Hodgson

Peyton Marshall spent most of the '90s playing bass in The Third Sex, a riot grrrl band from Portland, Oregon.

Empires: Extraction/ Empires: Infiltration

You wait forever for one alien invasion...



Release Date: OUT NOW!

328/346 pages | Hardback/ebook

Author: Gavin Deas

Publisher: Gollancz

FOR THE SAKE OF A

soundbite it's tempting to start this review: "Gavin Deas is clearly not the man who put the 'i' into 'ideas'," but that would be disingenuous. Because one thing this experiment doesn't lack is ideas. Sadly, it's collapsing under the weight of them.

The central conceit of this pair of books is that Earth is being invaded by two sets of aliens at the same time. This is a complete coincidence; even though the invaders are centuries-old enemies they don't seem to be aware of each other's presence... at first. *Extraction* concentrates on one invasion, with one set of human characters; *Infiltration* concentrates on the other invasion, featuring another set of characters. Part of the fun comes from spotting when the two stories



intersect, and you see the same scenes from different points of view.

Both books are one-tenth Iain M Banks-lite, with a few chapters containing some pretty hardcore SF concepts. The Weft, for example, are a pragmatically scientific race with two aspects and a knack for spaceships with personalities and silly names, while the Pleasure are shapeshifting, hedonistic capitalists on a grand scale who plan to get Earth hooked on a new drug – Bliss.

The remaining 90% is half urban thriller, half Michael Bay's *Transformers*. Gnarly cops, hard-arse government spooks and laconic special ops soldiers mix

with gangsters and drug dealers in-between random interspecies battles. At any given time you'll know precisely what weapons anyone is carrying but have little idea what their thoughts and motivations might be, while playing a drinking game where you take a swig every time you read the phrase, "a spray of blood," or, "his head came clean off" will leave you with alcohol poisoning. The action – as with a Bay film – is overlong and almost fetishistic in detail, to the point where it becomes dull, incoherent and skippable.

The structure also works against the storytelling, as the "alien POV" chapters have to be used for infodumping to give the reader any clue what's going on. It's a welcome technique, but hardly elegant.

In their favour, both books are fast-paced and blackly humorous, with a spattering of decent characters, and the crossovers add to the fun. But the overall feeling is that *Empires* was written as the result of a bet, and necessity has triumphed over substance. **Dave Golder**

Gavin Deas is actually a pseudonym for a two-man writing team – Gavin Smith and Stephen Deas.

BULLET TIME

A BOOK IN BULLET POINTS

STEAMPUNK LEGO

Release Date: OUT NOW!

192 pages | Hardback

Author: Guy Himber

Publisher: No Starch Press

- We've kinda reached saturation point with both "wacky spins on Lego" and "books about steampunk"... but combining the two is new!
- Across eleven carefully distressed chapters, this showcases the weird and wonderful creations of the Lego steampunk community.
- Yes, there's a Lego steampunk community.
- Our favourite section: "Space!", which features steam-powered versions of some familiar craft, including a, er, "Bow-Tie Fighter".
- Other chapters feature fearsome-looking railships, war machines and "monowheels" which might remind you of General Grievous's Wheel Bike.
- The level of invention is pretty impressive, elevating plastic brick assembly to an artform.



On The Beach

Nevil Shute, 1957

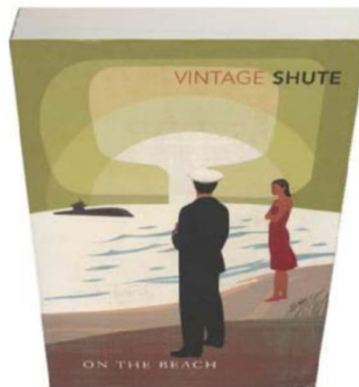
Remember when nuclear fallout felt like a very real and pressing danger? Stephen Baxter looks back

T O OLDER GENERATIONS Nevil Shute was a much-loved popular novelist, but to SF fans of my vintage and younger Shute's name is mostly associated with his enduring *On The Beach* – a book that may have had a more profound influence than most genre works.

Nevil Shute Norway, born in 1899 in London, worked in aircraft and airship engineering at an exciting time of rapid innovation, developing his writing in parallel. The Second World War was the making of Shute the popular novelist, who wrote about “small people of no great significance, caught up and swept together like dead leaves in the great whirlwind of the war.”

In 1948-9 Shute, becoming disillusioned with post-war Britain, left for Australia. In his 1952 pot-boiler novel *The Far Country*, the heroine Jennifer muses on one of the blessings of Australia: “Secure – I suppose it is. Nobody seems to be afraid an atom bomb is going to land next door tomorrow, like we are in England.” Shute's idea for *On The Beach* grew out of this wishful thinking. Initially he planned a story of how Australia might survive with the northern hemisphere destroyed by nuclear conflict, but his research showed him this was a vain hope. The book Shute finally wrote reflects this grim logic, taking its title from TS Eliot's “The Hollow Men”, which spoke of “this last of meeting places... the beach of the tumid river...” before the world ends “with a whimper”.

Following nuclear war in 1961, Australian society stoically waits for the fallout to arrive. The schedule of annihilation is relentlessly followed: “After [Melbourne has] gone Tasmania may last another fortnight, and the South Island of New Zealand...” We study the reactions of those who gather



The subtext is how we cope with the certainty of death

“on the beach”: coldly truthful, desperate love affairs, reckless drinking and partying. The book closes with a tough litany of final bits of business. The family of a young naval officer tidy up their house before delivering a lethal injection to their baby and going to bed.

Mainstream writers venturing into end-of-the-world SF seem to unnerve their readers more than genre writers. But the subtext is how we cope with the certainty of death: “None of us really believe it's ever going to happen – not to us. Everybody's crazy on that point, one way or another.”

Beach was Shute's widest success to date, and in 1959 was memorably filmed by Stanley Kramer. The stoicism of the characters offended some readers, but then Shute came from a generation which had stiff-upper-lipped its way through huge emergencies. Shute was a schoolboy when his brother, aged 19, died in the First World War trenches: “I was born to one end, which was to go into the army and do the best I could before being killed...” This stoical bleakness found expression in the calm acceptance of *Beach*.

As an “awful warning”, *Beach* was forward-looking; it would be decades before the idea of the “nuclear winter”, the global climate catastrophe that would likely follow a major nuclear exchange, formed. Shute blamed society at large for its nuclear folly: “The only possible hope would have been to educate them [the masses] out of their silliness.” If so the warning was effective; Shute's biographer claims that the novel and the movie spurred anti-nuclear-weapon sentiments.

Shute, who died in 1960, would not have described his books as SF, but as projections of the social transitions he saw around him. But Shute's popularity brought SF materials to a wide audience who may have read no SF other than his. And if *On The Beach* was the only SF novel you ever read, it was a story with a useful moral. **SFX**

Stephen Baxter's latest novel, Ultima, is reviewed on page 110.

LIKE THIS? TRY THESE!

Earth Abides
(George R Stewart, 1949)
A man tries to rebuild society after a plague wipes out most of humanity – both bleak and strangely uplifting.



The Road
(Cormac McCarthy, 2006)
Another tough apocalypse by a mainstream writer, a disintegrating journey across a cannibal-infested post-disaster landscape. In its way, as unflinching as Shute.



YOUR OPINIONS

Join the debate at
fb.me/sfxmagazine

▶ I saw the film first, and kept expecting a happy ending! Well, I was under ten! I was amazed to read the book to find out what they had cut out. The humanity and decency of all the characters probably would not be accepted today. It was truly an apocalyptic scenario, and I hope the world leaders may have read it and been shocked into seeing sense.

Bob Pierce

▶ I read this at the age of 12 and it has stayed with me. Read it again a few months back and it's lost none of its power. If you want a tale of cause and effect and a no-win scenario then this is the harsh end.

Greg Crisp

▶ Great read, thought provoking. Often wondered how I'd react in that situation. The grim inevitability is quite sad too.

John Murray

▶ Absolutely compelling book from the Cold War era. Well written, but totally bleak and heartbreaking.

Shane Rees

NEXT ISSUE

Margaret Atwood won the first ever Arthur C Clarke Award with her classic *The Handmaid's Tale*. So it's completely fitting that another Arthur C Clarke Award winner, South Africa's Lauren Beukes, will be analysing that modern classic for us.



If you've not read the book before (or you have but you've been waiting for an excuse to read it again) this is your chance to see what a top novelist and other SFX readers think.

GET READING

Adrian Tchaikovsky will be analysing Justina Robson's *Living Next Door To The God Of Love* in SFX 258.

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OVERVIEW

Avengers & X-Men: Axis

Superhero sides-swap smackdown



Release Date: **OUT NOW!**

Publisher: Marvel

Writer: Rick Remender

Artists: Andy Kubert, Leinil Francis Yu, Terry Dodson, Rachel Dodson



THE SUCCESS OF the controversial *Superior Spider-Man* storyline, in which Spidey was taken over by Doctor Octopus, has obviously got Marvel thinking: "If we did that with Spidey, why don't we do it with *everyone*?" The result is *Avengers & X-Men: Axis*, the latest splashy event comic to hit the market, and a saga which proves once again that excess isn't always a good storytelling tactic.

The preliminary set-up of this nine-issue miniseries is that thanks to a massed battle to stop the Red Skull (who's stolen the dead Charles Xavier's brain and hijacked his powers), a desperate spell mounted by the Scarlet Witch and Doctor

Doom causes reality to change. Suddenly, virtually all of Marvel's heroes begin embracing their darker sides, while their villains and adversaries find themselves motivated to fight for justice.



Red Onslaught: like Red Skull, but with more tentacles.

On the face of it, the series is a potentially fun way of reversing the usual status quo, but five issues in and Rick Remender's script has forsaken an actual story in favour of random melodrama and big-scale setpieces. *Superior Spider-Man* worked because it evolved into a smart exploration of what it means to be a hero, whereas *Axis* settles for everybody switching almost instantly to "Evil mode", sacrificing any hope of subtlety or interest along the way.

Matters aren't helped by *Axis* being the least new-reader-friendly comic Marvel has published in some years. Instead of being largely self-contained, this is actually the climax of a story arc that has been running across Remender's two-year stretch on *Uncanny Avengers*, and also follows up on plot-threads left by the tragic climax of 2012's *Avengers Vs X-Men*.

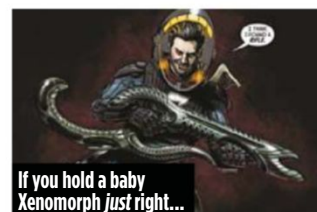
Remender then makes things worse by taking three issues to properly start the story, kicking things off with a 70-page battle sequence that's so relentlessly action-packed it leaves the whole series feeling overbalanced. Even once the battle is over, the story is pitched at such a frenetic level it's

Everyone switches almost instantly to "Evil mode"

like listening to an endless drum solo, while certain plot devices feel like an over-enthusiastic five-year-old has grabbed the reins (especially the reveal of Klugh, an additional and dangerously psychotic alter-ego for the Hulk).

At the least, the visuals reach a high standard: Andy Kubert brings a clear sense of energy and verve to the battle scenes in issues one and two, Leinil Francis Yu adds welcome grit and atmosphere in three and four, and Terry and Rachel Dodson take over with their usual stylish approach in issue five. There's never a point where *Axis* isn't impressive to look at, but while recent Marvel event comics like *Infinity* and *Original Sin* felt like they were genuinely ambitious, *Axis* is a demented jumble of ideas that's failing to cohere into a satisfying story. **Saxon Bullock**

Axis will lead into the relaunch of *Uncanny Avengers* in January, with an all-new team mostly comprised of ex-villains.



OVERVIEW

Prometheus: Fire & Stone

Imperfect Engineering

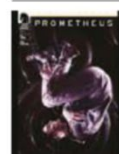


Release Date: **OUT NOW!**

Publisher: Dark Horse

Writer: Paul Tobin

Artist: Juan Ferreyra



WHETHER WE ever get a cinematic follow-up to Ridley Scott's divisive *Alien* prequel *Prometheus* remains to be seen,

but where there's demand, there are spin-off stories waiting to be told. Thanks to that, Dark Horse have continued their long-running association with the *Alien* and *Predator* franchises with a collection of four-issue miniseries, all connected by the mysteries of *Prometheus*.

There are linked *Fire & Stone* tales for *Aliens*, *Predator* and *Aliens Vs Predator*, but the overall story begins with this flawed *Prometheus* miniseries. Some 125 years after Peter Weyland's fateful mission to the planetoid LV-223, a new team arrives to investigate what happened to the *Prometheus*'s crew, but soon run into trouble thanks to the mysterious black ooze, one of the legendary Engineers, and some very familiar Xenomorphs...

The climactic issue wasn't available at press time, but the first three parts are an uneven mix. The script does its best to build up atmosphere and pulls off some effectively horrific moments, but it also falls into predictable patterns and doesn't give us a chance to properly get to know the characters before they start dropping like flies. These flaws are almost balanced by lush, spectacular art from Juan Ferreyra, but despite strong moments this isn't quite the kick-start that this new phase of the *Alien* comic franchise needed. **Saxon Bullock**

Also out now: *River Of Pain* by Christopher Golden, the third in Titan Books' series of all-new *Alien* novels.



GRAPHIC NOVEL

Teen Titans: Earth One Volume One

Teenage Kicks



Release Date: OUT NOW!

144 pages | Hardback/ebook

Publisher: DC Comics

Writer: Jeff Lemire

Artists: Terry Dodson, Rachel Dodson



DC HASN'T

exactly been cracking the whip as far as the *Earth One* graphic novels go – this latest release in the series is

only the fourth to appear since 2011, and the first in over two years.

Conceived as self-contained, accessible reboots for the bookstore market, critical acclaim for previous *Earth One* volumes has been patchy but they've been financial successes, so it makes sense to broaden the series out from Superman and

Batman-based titles with DC's popular team of youthful heroes.

Making sweeping changes from the official DC origin story, this opening adventure brings the Titans together as a group of disaffected Oregon-based teens who start experiencing strange alien visions. These spark off a series of bizarre transformations, as they each discover new abilities that also throw them into direct conflict with their parents, who've known about their potential superpowers for a very long time, setting the scene for a battle between the younger and older generations...

Writer Jeff Lemire keeps the action engaging and the characters relatable, even if he can't disguise the almighty debt the plot owes to Brian K Vaughan's Marvel teen saga



There's a new look for Cyborg.

Runaways. The art from Terry and Rachel Dodson is cartoonier than their normal style but enjoyable all the same, and there's a healthy mix of emotive drama and superhero action. This first volume isn't quite a must-read, but it does set up an entertaining story while also hinting at promising directions to come.

Saxon Bullock

One of the *Earth One* novels still lacking a release date is Grant Morrison and Yannick Paquette's take on *Wonder Woman*.

GRAPHIC NOVEL

Batman: The Jiro Kuwata Batmanga Volume One

West goes East



Release Date: 16 December

352 pages | Paperback/ebook

Publisher: DC Comics

Writer/artist: Jiro Kuwata



ONE REASON

Batman has maintained his popularity so long is that he's a character who can survive multiple interpretations,

and few of these are as weirdly distinctive as this series of licenced Japanese Batman adventures, produced in the late '60s to cash in on the popularity of the Adam West-starring TV show. Samplings of these tales were seen in the 2008

book *Bat-Manga*, but now DC is collecting the whole saga together in English for the first time.

The resulting adventures make an offbeat companion volume to DC's current *Batman '66* series. Kuwata's Caped Crusader is just as far-fetched as anything in the classic TV show – perhaps even weirder, since it's played with a straight face. Bruce Wayne and Dick Grayson battle undead gangsters, an evil human bouncing-ball and other loopy threats, and the action is rendered in a wonderfully kinetic old-fashioned manga style, packing impact into even the craziest moments.

It can sometimes feel like Batman and Robin have wandered into an old-school anime like *Lupin III* or



Adam West's paunch didn't make it in.

Speed Racer, and the demented charm of the stories keeps this collection consistently entertaining. The '60s art style may be too archaic for some, and there's never really a point where these stories add up to anything other than glorious nonsense, but it's still refreshing to see Batman viewed from a new cultural angle. **Saxon Bullock**

Kuwata-created Bat-villain Lord Death Man was resurrected recently for an appearance in Grant Morrison's *Batman Incorporated*.



Bunny bowlers are in this year.

OVERVIEW

Wild's End

Aliens vs animals



Release Date: OUT NOW!

Publisher: Boom! Studios

Writer: Dan Abnett

Artist: INJ Culbard



WITH DARK

Ages publishing simultaneously over at Dark Horse, Dan Abnett and INJ Culbard are on a roll.

And with an extraterrestrial menace crashing down upon an unsuspecting Earth in both series, thematic links can be drawn between the two.

Described as *The War Of The Worlds* meets *The Wind In The Willows*, *Wild's End* is superior to *Dark Ages*' more straightforward scenario of a band of medieval mercenaries battling invading aliens, and its quintessentially English village and various anthropomorphic animal residents fit Culbard's deceptively simple artwork well. Featuring impressive attention to detail, it's so affectionately drawn that it's almost a shame when the idyllic peace is shattered by the arrival of a mysterious mechanical device...

Halfway through this six-parter, deadly robotic creatures are so far the most that we've seen of the otherworldly threat. Focusing on a rag-tag group of uneasy allies including brooding former seadog Clive, reclusive feline author Susan and wily rogue Fawkes (a fox, of course), Abnett ramps up the tension and has no qualms about slaughtering your favourite character – no matter how cute they are. He also peppers the script with some deliciously sardonic one-liners (the smell of one porcine victim burning in her home is described as "crackling"). All in all, it makes for an amusing animal comic you will want to pork out on. **Stephen Jewell**

London-bred Culbard spent summers in Poland. As English practice, his mum had him copy from *The Wind In The Willows*.

Dragon Age: Inquisition

Ages and ages and ages



Release Date: OUT NOW!

Format reviewed: PS4

Also available on: PS3, PS3, Xbox 360, Xbox One, PC
Publisher: EA



WAKING UP

with the obligatory amnesia after the sky tore open and killed everyone in your vicinity, your hero or heroine in the third part of Bioware's RPG series finds itself in a game that seems out of ideas before it even begins. The green portals through which wraiths and demons are spilling out are essentially *The Elder Scrolls' Oblivion Gates*, and for the first hour you can almost say each character's next line before they do, such is the well-travelled narrative path on which the story begins. *Game Of Thrones* it ain't.

The bigger problem with *Dragon Age: Inquisition's* opening, though, is how poorly it explains its myriad systems, and how little incentive

you're given to explore them. Our first ten hours were spent almost exclusively hoarding iron, elfroot and leather simply because the barrage of collectable-based quests told us to. Occasionally we'd gain +1 power, or some influence points, and not know what to do with them other than collecting more. Back to strip-mining the area of resources, then.

When you finally satisfy Bioware's demand that you play dress-up as an *Assassin's Creed* level-janitor tidying up the mini-map of detritus for a few hours, *DA:I* improves exponentially. The meters and gauges that once baffled now form an interesting strategic layer, power being a kind of currency used to perform operations in person, or via agents on your

This dragon would like you to collect ten pieces of iron. Or else.



Our first ten hours were spent hoarding iron

behalf. You are the leader of the Inquisition, after all, and you're the only one with the power to close the Fade Rift portals – you're kind of a big deal.

Less jovial and colourful than *Dragon Age II's* cast, the supporting roles of the *Inquisition* don't really emerge as engaging characters until a couple of wonderful story missions that take sudden diversions into uncharted territory. These are built upon by increasingly focused primary quests that do the near-impossible and make you care about the people who previously only seemed to exist to get you digging for herbs and collecting shards.

Dragon Age: Inquisition is almost a masterful RPG. With time your early frustrations seem almost insignificant, but they can't be forgotten entirely. **Phil Iwaniuk**

✎ Miranda Raison, voice of Cassandra Pentaghast, played Tallulah in *Doctor Who* two-parter "Daleks in Manhattan".

Assassin's Creed: Unity

Flawed French farce



Release date: OUT NOW!

Format reviewed: PS4

Also available on: Xbox One, PC
Publisher: Ubisoft



IN ONE

particular scene of this time-hopping-through-a-computer title, a key character says to you, "You'll run into a lot of incomplete, corrupted code." Ha! Ha. Heh. Oh...

As the first current-gen-only *Assassin's Creed* – released with fanfare on the same day as all-but ignored last-gen title *AC: Rogue* – *Unity* attempts to introduce radical new ideas, and some of the new mission structures are among the best-crafted quests the series has ever hosted. The problem is that they're encased in a buggy, broken experience that can't keep up. The new current-gen engine splutters and splurts and almost ruins the game. We fell through the world, climbed into walls, collided



with a single-figure frame rate, watched characters popping in from nothingness, and much more.

Portions of *Unity* are great: the fascinating Paris-during-the-Revolution backdrop; the time period-hopping "server bridges", which are thrilling rollercoaster set-pieces that indirectly replace the old linear secret locations; and true assassination missions, which feel like micro *Hitman* levels. All help balance out the disappointment at the engine's flaws.

The underlying game is great fun at times, and if it works when patched it'll be well worth playing. But in its current state, this simply isn't good enough. Bugs really throw *Unity* under the guillotine.

Matthew Pellett

✎ The French Left party has criticised *Unity*, saying it promotes, "counter-revolutionary clichés forged over two centuries".

Call Of Duty: Advanced Warfare

COD with too much salt



Release Date: OUT NOW!

Format reviewed: PS4

Also available on: PS3, Xbox 360, Xbox One, PC
Publisher: Activision



POPULAR

wisdom would have it that you can't teach an old *COD* new tricks; that its formula was carved into a stone tablet years ago, never to be defied. But *Advanced Warfare* doesn't care about that stone tablet. It's here to change things. It's here to give you something new: the freedom of the *Exo Suit*, which is definitely not ripping off *Titanfall*. No.

Your new techno-trousers offer up fresh movement options, and maps have been designed with that verticality in mind. Online multiplayer flourishes thanks to developer Sledgehammer's willingness to splice *COD's* slightly inbred DNA with outside influences such as *Team Fortress 2*. Single-player, though, doesn't.



The over-arching narrative of a corporation exploiting a global terror threat to gain a stranglehold on military resources is more than strong enough to keep things ticking over. Kevin Spacey adds not just A-list glitz to the plot, but occasional moments of brilliant dramatic execution. Then you're presented with a "Press triangle to pay respects" quick time event at an otherwise sombre military funeral, and the whole house of cards (high five!) falls down.

Advanced Warfare is good at changing the pace by introducing lenient stealth bits to soothe your trigger finger after the last big gunfight, but it won't ever admit the absurdity of its events. Stick to online play. **Phil Iwaniuk**

✎ A whopping 3% of *Advanced Warfare's* solo story is spent looking at your character's hands. Thrilling stuff.



AUDIO CDs

Doctor Who

Masterly machinations and dastardly Daleks

Dark Eyes 3

★★★★★

Release Date: **OUT NOW!**

230 minutes | CD/download
Publisher: Big Finish

Masters Of Earth

★★★★★

Release Date: **OUT NOW!**

135 minutes | CD/download
Publisher: Big Finish

The Bounty Of Ceres

★★★★★

Release Date: **OUT NOW!**

115 minutes | CD/download
Publisher: Big Finish

FOLLOWING NEATLY ON

from New *Who*'s recent reinvention of the Master, the latest Big Finish box set portrays a more traditional take on the Doctor's arch-enemy. Proceeding directly from *Dark Eyes 2*'s cliffhanger, the third instalment of the saga sees the Eighth Doctor (Paul McGann) put on the trail of the Master, who's attempting to use the metahuman abilities of Irish WW1 nursing assistant Molly O'Sullivan to control the all-conquering Eminence.

As before, it's a box set of four one-hour episodes, and the tone is dark as the Doctor's battle with the Master takes in multiple locations and timelines. *Dark Eyes 3* has plenty of strong moments and dramatic twists, and McGann is on excellent form as always – it just doesn't quite

equal the narrative drive of its predecessors, and feels a little stretched across its four-hour running time.

Elsewhere, *Masters Of Earth* pitches the Sixth Doctor and Peri into a challenging dilemma, as they arrive in Scotland in 2163, a year before the First Doctor is due to defeat the Dalek occupation of Earth. Despite his best efforts, the Sixth Doctor ends up involved in a desperate race to the potential safety of a Scottish island. The story utilises imaginative concepts alongside powerful action sequences and well-used continuity references. A pacey wartime thriller with an effective sense of bleakness, it does a great job of capturing the mood of 1964's "The Dalek Invasion Of Earth", while also delivering an impactful and gripping adventure.

Finally, in the latest Early Adventures release, *The Bounty Of Ceres*, things get impressively hard SF as the TARDIS arrives on a dwarf planet in the asteroid belt, where the First Doctor, Vicki and Steven run into trouble with a group of asteroid miners and an unknown force that's out to kill them. The script does a good job of mixing the Hartnell era's educational style with a more modern approach, and evolves into a brisk SF drama that also pulls off some interesting character work on Steven, exploring his astronaut background in more detail than the original show ever managed. **Saxon Bullock**

Also out (on 18 December): a reading of War Doctor novel *Engines Of War*, performed by Dalek voice Nicholas Briggs.

AUDIO CD

Welcome To Our Village, Please Invade Carefully

Keep Calm And Carry On

★★★★★

Release Date: **18 December**

Publisher: BBC Physical Audio

DONE RIGHT, SF RADIO

comedy can be just sublime – *Hitchhiker's Guide* proved that. Unfortunately it also provides a high standard that everything else will be compared against. Thankfully, this sitcom more than stands up for itself.

In many ways, it barely feels like SF at all, just the comedy in close-up BBC radio's so good at. The village of Cresdon Green has been taken over by aliens and cut off from the outside world. With a domed forcefield keeping everyone trapped and a mental block preventing the rest of the world remembering they were there, the villagers attempt to get on with their lives while being studied in preparation for a planetary invasion.

This release includes the original pilot, series one (four episodes) and



series two (six episodes). There are various cast changes as it goes on – it's a shame *The IT Crowd*'s Katherine Parkinson is replaced after the pilot, but Hattie Morahan does a good job as Katrina Lyons, head of the resistance, and Peter Davison is excellent as her cricket-loving father. There are plenty of in-jokes for SF fans to enjoy as well, from references to etheric beam locators and a sonic Allen key to an appearance from original Ford Prefect Geoffrey McGovern. The resistance's woeful plans are more annoying than amusing, but as an examination of the absurdities of English village life with an alien twist, this is superb.

Rhian Drinkwater

Writer Eddie Robson has made all eight drafts of one script available online: <http://bit.ly/welcomecripts>.

BOARDGAME

Frankenstein's Bodies

Playing the face card

★★★★★

Release Date: **OUT NOW!**

Two to six players | £30

Publisher: Yay Games

THERE'S NOTHING QUITE

like placing an unwanted and infected leg unceremoniously onto the edge of someone's otherwise pristine table. Well, apart from sending your master surgeon out to harvest their heads. That's pretty satisfying too.

The delicate multiplayer card-juggling politics of this boardgame, best experienced with as many competing monster-builders as possible, won't emerge until everyone around the table has puzzled their way through the very-Kickstarter-quality manual. But when they do, the simple conceit of being able to play any card (from body parts to disinfectants and beyond) almost anywhere – on your own operating tables, or those of your opponents – turns this race to assemble the perfect monster into



one of devious alliances, betrayals, and getting up to your armpits in a binful of unwanted body bits.

Sticky virtual science put aside, real-life friendships are likely to fray when the sticky subject of the deflection cards appears. They don't stop an action but... deflect it? Somehow? It's a tricky rule to fathom. This and other weak spots in the manual mean that gameplay sessions are likely to devolve into house-ruled lab-monsters more often than not.

We should also point out – not that it matters, really – that the flimsy stock used for the cards and operating tables is disappointing. You wouldn't want to get a bend in your favourite torso.

Alex Cox

Yay Games is working on a more family-friendly game based on the concept, titled *Sandcastles*. It features naughty crabs.

Box Of Delights

What we've been playing with this month

1 Batman Oven Glove

Half Moon Bay | Length: 29.5 cm | RRP: £9.99 | FPI price: £6.99 | Catalogue number: C1393

We've seen the Dark Knight employ everything from Bat-Cuffs to Bat-Grappling Hooks, Bat-Grenades to Shark Repellent Bat-Spray. Now added to the arsenal is the Bat-Mitt, bringing Batman's merciless fist of justice to the act of taking hot pizza from the oven. Holy culinary crackdown! It comes complete with gauntlet fins and, bizarrely, some kind of pretend command pad on the palm, just in case you want to fantasise about switching an oven glove on and off.



2 Game Of Thrones Mugs

Pyramid International | Height: 10cm | RRP: £5.99 | FPI price: £4.99 | Catalogue numbers: C2401, C2402, C2407, C2408, C2418

How do you like your tea? Do you consider it your duty to honour the teabag and do its bidding sincerely? Sup from House Tully. Do you boil your water over open flame and eschew tea bags, instead brewing tea from your own seeping wounds? Targaryen for you. Lannister, Tyrell, Arryn, Baratheon and Stark designs are also available.

3 Hand Of The King Bookmark

Length: 8cm | RRP: £6.99 | FPI price: £5.99 | Catalogue number: B7951

The Hand Of The King is one of the deadliest roles in Westeros. Have the real thing pinned to your lapel and you can expect to be beheaded, poisoned or killed on the crapper. Fortunately the bookmark comes without the certainty of a swift death. It looks fairly authentic, but the hand itself is strangely skeletal. A comment on the lethal calling? We like to think so. Littlefinger's Mockingbird pin is also available.



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6 TARDIS Bookends

Underground Toys | Height: 17cm | RRP £39.99 | FPI price £36.99 | Catalogue number: B9593

The Mark Two Metropolitan Police Box is a classic piece of design... so why on earth would you chop it in half? That's our issue with these heavy duty resin bookends. Surely two TARDISES would make much more sense than one sliced in two? Once you've actually inserted some books in the middle it all just looks a bit weird, since the two halves don't line up. Bah.



4 Dalek PVC Coaster

Half Moon Bay | Width: 13.5cm | RRP £4.99 | FPI price £3.99 | Catalogue number: C1395

These rather large coasters are made of floppy PVC rather than the usual cork. That's probably a good thing, as in our experience the cork ones are highly susceptible to water damage - accidentally leave one in a pool of water and stains ensue. This one features an extermination of Daleks in a blue and grey livery reminiscent of 1984's "Resurrection Of The Daleks"; a TARDIS design is also available featuring the top half of a Police Box.

FUNKO PRODUCT OF THE MONTH

5 Terminator Figures

Funko | Height: 9-10cm | RRP £9.99 each | FPI price: £8.99 each | Catalogue numbers: B6981, B6982, B6983, B6984, B6985, B6986

(Heavy Austrian accent) "Is that Sarah Connor?" If you didn't know these ReAction figures were based on *The Terminator*, you'd have a hard job guessing, so questionable are the likenesses - with the possible exception of the two cyborgs. Still, the build quality gives the figures an authentic '80s vibe, while the detachable legs on the robots (we think that's intentional) make you nostalgic for the classic *Empire Strikes Back* C-3PO figure.

THINGS TO COME

MORE GOODIES COMING YOUR WAY

EXPECT TO PAY
£60



RICK GRIMES BAG

ETA: FEBRUARY

No doubt, as an *SFX* reader, you're all tooled-up ready for the inevitable zombie apocalypse. But where to keep your various glocks, snub-nosed Smith & Wessons and pump-action shotguns? Pop them in this replica of Rick's duffle bag (complete with "Sheriff" and "Grimes" patches) and you'll be good to go the moment Armageddon descends.

EXPECT TO PAY
£60



LAWGIVER STATUE

ETA: MARCH

"Ape shall not kill ape." This fundamental rule of the *Planet Of The Apes* universe was just one of those laid down in the Sacred Scrolls by the Lawgiver - statues of whom were dotted around Ape City. This resin replica stands 12 inches tall, but sadly it doesn't weep tears if it witnesses a murder. Come on chaps - all we need is a little water tank that slots in the back, a bit of tubing and a button to push! Do we have to think of everything?

EXPECT TO PAY
£270



SUPERMAN AND BATMAN BOOKENDS

ETA: JUNE

Well, hello boys! Judging by the foot-on-a-rock stance adopted here, spandex must *really* overheat your genitals; either that, or they've been taking tips on testicle display from Commander Riker. These hefty bookends are based on cover art by Jim Lee - specifically *Superman* #204 and the second printing of *Batman* #608.

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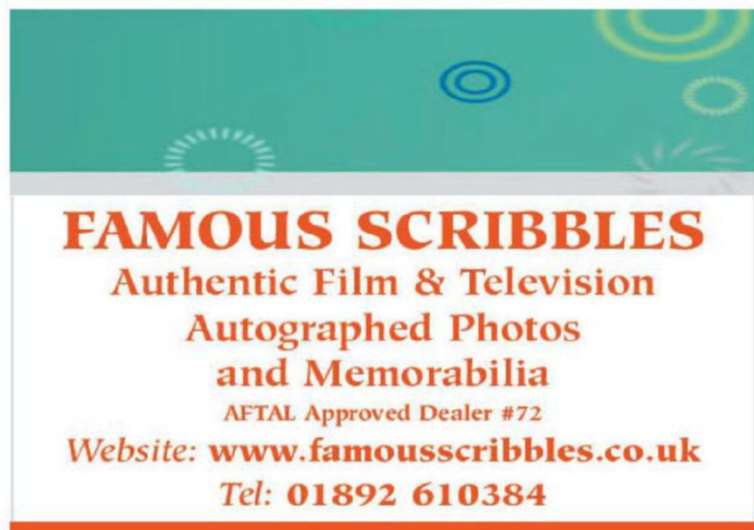
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What's On

What to watch when this month*



- **Mondays** – *Star Wars Rebels* is on Disney XD, *Gotham* is on Channel 5, and *The Librarians* is on Syfy.
- **Tuesdays** – Catch *The Flash* on Sky 1, *The Vampire Diaries* is on ITV2 and *The Originals* is on Syfy, and *American Horror Story: Freak Show* continues on Fox. The *Black Mirror* festive special is on Channel 4 on 16 December.
- **Wednesdays** – Head over to *Sleepy Hollow* via Universal.
- **Thursdays** – There's *Arrow* and *Forever* on Sky 1, while Syfy plays host to *Defiance* (until 11 December) and *Dominion* (until 18 December). Then on 25 December, there's the *Doctor Who* Christmas special...
- **Fridays** – Catch those *Agents Of SHIELD* on Channel 4.
- **Saturdays** – The second series of *Atlantis* continues on BBC One, and *Constantine* is on Amazon Prime within hours of its US broadcast.

*Remember, Christmas will drive this lot mad this month. Keep an eye on your TV listings.



BROADCAST UK: AIRED ON BBC ONE US: AIRED ON BBC AMERICA

Doctor Who

Incredibly divisive – and it's been good for the show

Has there ever been a more polarising series of *Doctor Who* than Peter Capaldi's first? Depending on who you talked to, he was the best/worst Doctor in years, the stories were wonderful/a disaster, Clara was an amazing companion/a pain in the bum, and her relationship with Danny Pink was a triumph/waste of time. Some people liked Capaldi and not the stories. Some people liked the stories and not Capaldi. Even in the *SFX* office it's been near-impossible to find a consensus on any of the episodes.

For my money it's been comfortably the best series since the David Tennant era. Capaldi has been an intriguing Time Lord, an ambiguous enigma whose next move is always a mystery; there have been some genuinely memorable and original stories, not least the wonderful "Listen" and "Flatline"; and Jenna Coleman has been a revelation, an engaging heart for the show in those moments when the Twelfth Doctor has been difficult to like. For the first

time in ages, it's been a show I've been excited about watching every week, rather than tuning in in the hope it'll wow me. I've therefore found it hard to understand the vitriol pointed towards series eight in some quarters of the internet.

Yet perversely, I think it's a good thing that some people haven't been quite so keen.

For starters, the BBC should probably be worried when fans *stop* moaning about the show. Sure, some complaints have been way over the top (sadly that's the way of the internet), but the fact that people are getting worked up about the show does at least prove they're passionate – and will tune in whatever.

More importantly, however, the fact that audiences have been so split about this year's offering shows that Steven Moffat and his team are doing something right. *Doctor Who*

BONUS FEATURES

► **Deja Vu:** The Cybermen coming down the steps of St Paul's Cathedral in "Dark Water" is a nod to a scene in Patrick Troughton adventure "The Invasion".

► **Trivia:** "Mummy On The Orient Express" guest star Frank Skinner is a lifelong *Who* fan. "I've got a five-foot cardboard Dalek in my bedroom and when I got the call saying they wanted me to read for the part, I was in the back of my tour bus watching episode three of 'The Sensorites'," he's said.

► **Best Line:** The Doctor (to Clara): "Stop it with the eyes. Don't do that with the eyes. How do you do that anyway? It's like they inflate."



Missy's smartphone contained some faintly disturbing selfies.

should be continually evolving and reinventing itself – if we're seeing the same thing every year, the production team aren't making proper use of the most versatile TV drama format in history. If the show had never moved with the times, it would still be filmed on static, stagey sets, in black-and-white, with an actor in his mid-fifties in the title role... Er, okay, we'll give you that one, but in 2014 even an older Doctor is a reinvention. And a much needed one too – there was only so long we could watch cool skinny guys running around time and space with a woman they may or may not want to have it off with. It was fun while it lasted, but that style of *Who* has had its time.

This year's edgier tone was exactly what the show needed. It's good when TV drama keeps you on your toes, when you don't know what the leading man will do next and he operates in a world of shades-of-grey morality. And top marks to Moffat and co for making Clara as key to the series as the Doctor himself – we should be applauding the fact that the Doctor has an intelligent foil every bit his equal.

Of course, if you don't like *Doctor Who*'s current incarnation, there's no need to worry. Capaldi's time will end, he'll regenerate, and the show will be new once more. Maybe, with the way for a gender swap cleared by the Master's latest appearance, the Doctor will be a woman. That *would* be the biggest change in the show's history, and I look forward to seeing what it does to *Doctor Who*. If the results are as good as this series, we'll be in for a treat.

Richard Edwards

MINDPROBE

Mark Addy

The *Atlantis* strongman on what's in store for Hercules

Were you pleased with the reaction to the first series?

Very pleased. It can take a while for an audience to find a show and get what it is. I think people possibly expected it to take itself more seriously, but I quite like the fact that it doesn't. Yes, series two is a bit more serious, but the humour is still there as well, it's an important element of the show. It allows you to go to more perilous places.

Is there hope for Hercules and Medusa?

Well Medusa is in the next studio, so she is back on the scene this series. She was left at the end of season one in a cave, cursed, but she's back for a while. So there is a bit of happiness for Hercules, but it's a doomed relationship from the outset. As is *Atlantis* itself. There's always the thought that this is not going to end well.

We saw plenty of Jason topless last series, is it Hercules' turn this year?

Yes I'm afraid, you've got to take the rough with the smooth! Robert Emms [Pythagoras] hasn't had to take his shirt off yet, which needs addressing. Possibly if we need more light – he's the only man in *Atlantis* with no tan. He's the Jimmy White of *Atlantis*.

Have you seen the *Hercules* movie yet?

Not yet. We should put together a series of tests between myself and Mr Johnson [The Rock]. I could probably drink him under the table, or I'd give it a good go! But that's about it. I will see it, just to see what the competition is like.

Jordan Farley

Atlantis series two is currently airing Saturdays on BBC One.



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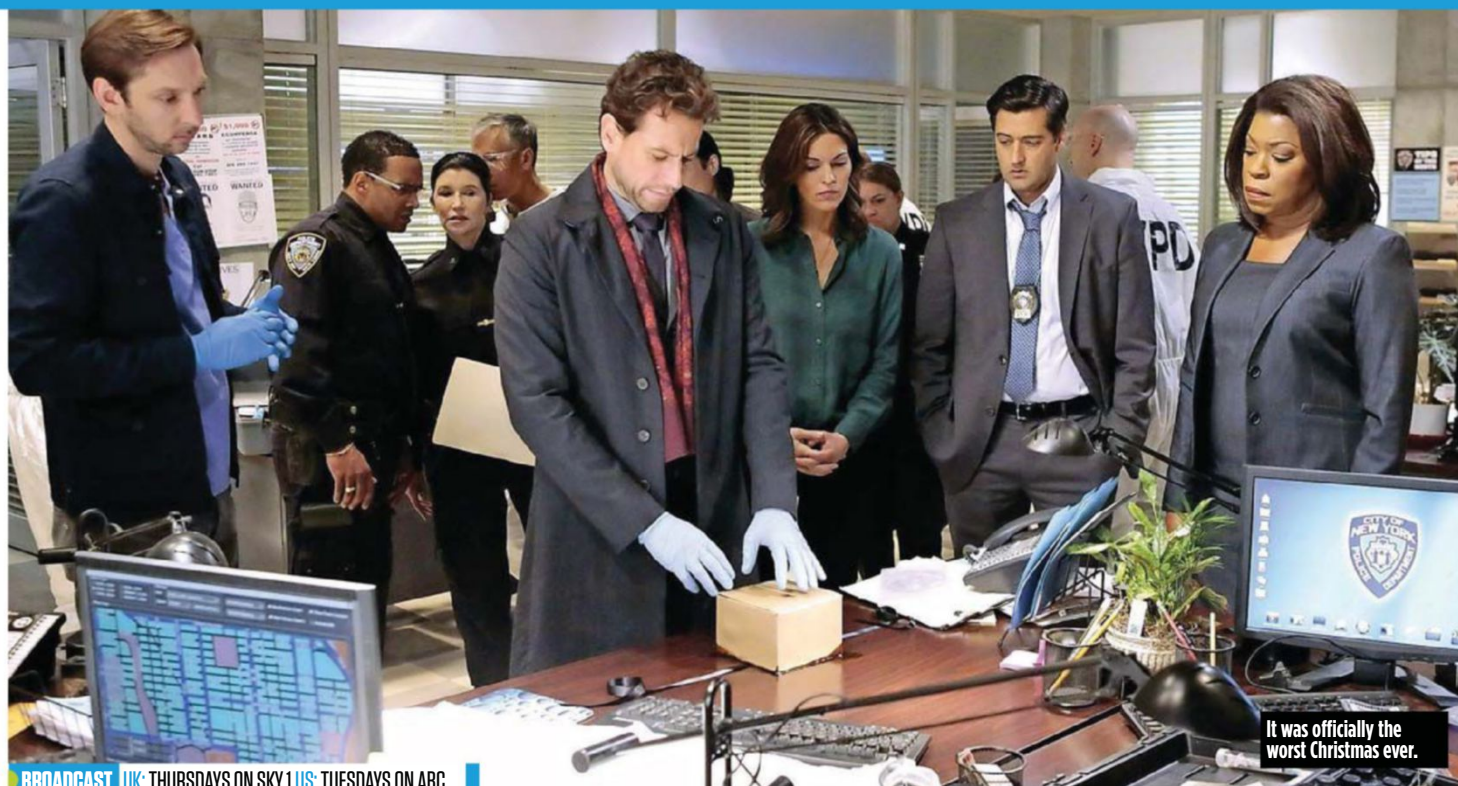
This advertisement features a collage of various pop culture toys and collectibles. At the top left is a Star Trek Enterprise model. Below it are Star Wars figures including Stormtroopers, Darth Vader, and R2-D2. In the center are Transformers Optimus Prime and a C-3PO figure. To the right are Predator and Alien figures, a Dalek, and a Thomas the Tank Engine train. Other items include a TARDIS, a Starship Enterprise, a Buzz Lightyear figure, and a Ghostbusters Ecto-1.

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This advertisement features a collage of movie, TV, and comic book characters. On the left is Doctor Who. Next to him is a woman in a bikini, followed by Deadpool, Batman, and a blonde woman in a white and red costume. On the right is a large figure of Gollum with a wolf on his back. The background is a blue film strip with a bright light effect. The text 'HEROTROPOLIS.COM.AU' is in large orange letters, and 'BRINGING MOVIE, TV AND COMIC MAGIC TO LIFE!' is in white letters. The word 'YOUR' is in a stylized font. At the bottom, 'COLLECTABLES ✦ COSTUMES ✦ CLOTHING' is written in white letters.



BROADCAST UK: THURSDAYS ON SKY 1 US: TUESDAYS ON ABC

It was officially the worst Christmas ever.

Forever

Is there nothing new to immortality?

IMMORTALITY IS A CURSE. NOT so much for the world-weary immortals doomed to an eternity of Dave repeats but rather for us, the poor TV viewers subjected to an endless succession of shows about the ungrateful whingers.

Forever, the new *New Amsterdam*, is the latest show to be added to the ever living list, and it brings precious little originality to the table. Not just in terms of the immortality genre, but TV drama in general.

Ioan Gruffudd (*Hornblower*, *Fantastic Four*) plays Henry Morgan who, 200 years ago, for no adequately explained reason, became immortal. Now, whenever he dies, his body vanishes and he's reborn aged 35-ish, always emerging from a body of water, completely naked. We know all

this within the first five minutes of the first episode because Gruffudd handily narrates the information in character, reading sleepily in the style of a man narrating a Winnie The Pooh tale on *Jackanory*. It's a curious manner he retains for the copious voiceovers throughout the whole series.

Having spent some time working as a doctor and a gravedigger, Morgan is now testing his skills as a police pathologist because, he says, "when you're obsessed with death, you go where the action is." We know, however, that he's really doing the job because once a US TV writer has come up a concept, the next step is

BONUS FEATURES

► **Typecasting:** Lorraine Toussant is playing virtually the same character she played in *Saving Grace*: the gruff but intrinsically good-hearted police chief.
► **Telefantasy Form:** Creator and showrunner Matt Miller was also showrunner on the swirly cancelled supernatural drama

666 Park Avenue starring *Lost*'s Terry O'Quinn.

► **Format Fundamentals:** It's established that Henry Morgan's body vanishes - complete with his clothes - when he dies. But he is always reborn in water completely naked. So what happens to his clothes?

► **Best Line:** Abraham: "Youth is wasted on the immortal."

grafting that concept to a crime format. They have to: a show about an immortal hairdresser is going to be really dull.

Morgan also seems to have an eidetic memory, because he spots clues at crime scenes like Sherlock Holmes wielding his favourite magnifying glass, and reads suspects like Patrick Jayne in *The Mentalist*. So that's handy. He also has his very own sceptical police partner, a geeky medical forensic and an abrasive boss who's actually on his side. There's an arc plot concerning a mysterious, immortal adversary for Henry. Anyone spotted a USP yet? No? Let's move on.

What is different about the show is the tone. It's not dark and dour, it's fluffy and lightweight, in the vein of *The Mentalist*, and its best feature is the fun it has killing off Henry at every opportunity, often in bizarre circumstances. He even strategically elects to die on occasions, if it proves convenient. The cases of the week are mildly diverting and the characters have been well cast so it's a perfectly watchable show. It's also, sadly, almost totally forgettable.

Dave Golder

YOU HAVE BEEN WATCHING... GOTHAM

SFX's Facebook and Twitter users pass judgement on the Bat-prequel

► It's been all about Penguin for me. He's ace. MORE PENGUIN!
Di Alexander

► Enjoyed the first episode but it's getting less interesting with each passing week. It's really little more than another police procedural show, and doesn't seem sure whether it wants to be gritty or camp.

Ian Salsbury

► Like it, but it's no wonder Batman can beat his enemies. By the time he's 20, they'll all be pensioners.

Glenn Marvell-James

► I think it is an interesting new take on a story that everyone on the planet must know by now. I do enjoy spotting the future Bat-villains, though.

Gary Pratt

► The writers have no clue what to do with certain villains because there's no Batman. They need to commit to making this about said villains, and build up to a desperate need for the Dark Knight. If they go with the adult and mature, like the Batman games, they could be on to a winner.

Daniel Southwold

► I love how they are slowly drip feeding Oswald into the series arc. Great writing and respect for the character.

Phil Jones

► I would much rather have seen *Gotham Central* as a TV show. Actually have Batman around, but not in the show, like an urban legend.

Mark Howe

► Terrible acting, too many shoehorned-in references and it's a *Batman* series without Batman. Too many liberties taken with some characters. OTT and camp yet takes itself far too seriously - future Gotham kingpin The Penguin just murders a bloke for a sandwich?

Neil Hickman





BROADCAST UK: TBA US: FRIDAYS ON SYFY FROM 16 JANUARY

Three humans.

12 Monkeys

A quality reboot? It's about time

WHEN IT WAS ANNOUNCED that Terry Gilliam's classic *12 Monkeys* was getting made into a television series, eyebrows were certainly raised in SFX Towers, but with the sheer volume of remakes happening lately, it was hard to get too excited. Then we

saw Terry Matalas and Travis Fickett's update, and it wasn't what we expected. In fact, it turned out to be the time-travel thriller we didn't know we wanted...

Shedding the surreal landscapes of Gilliam's movie, Matalas and Fickett really only mine the original film for its premise and core characters. From there the series

BONUS FEATURES

- **Behind The Scenes:** Pilot director Jeffrey Reiner also piloted *Caprica* and *Helix*.
- **It's Wossisname!** *Fringe* fans get to enjoy the return of actor

Kirk Acevedo (but not his doomed character Charlie Francis, sadly) to sci-fi TV as Ramses, Cole's best friend.

► **Best Line:** Jones: "Spirituality is science we don't understand yet."

immediately establishes a far more stark, realistic sensibility with future convict/chrononaut assassin James Cole (Aaron Stanford) – played by Bruce Willis in the film – as a proactive warrior bent on accomplishing his mission.

Cole the accidental mental patient is no more, his film persona switched out for one with a goal which better suits a series. While he's still a biologically manipulated survivor of a global pandemic that wiped out seven billion people, in this iteration he's got a very clear and unambiguous goal: find virologist Dr Cassandra Raily (Amanda Schull) so she can lead him to find, and kill, the alleged creator of the plague, Leland Frost (Zeljko Ivanek).

Through the clever use of a watch that illustrates paradoxes eloquently, and several well-constructed time jumps throughout the narrative (visiting 2043, 2013 and 2015), Cole is able to convince Raily that he's not a rambling psycho – and that he could actually be humanity's saviour if he can sacrifice one life for billions. She buys the tall tale he's spinning, and together they infiltrate an event that puts them face-to-face with their target. Of course, the endeavour turns out to be not quite as easy as planned, as Cole discovers that something called the Army Of The 12 Monkeys is actually responsible for the coming bio-apocalypse.

The pilot is brilliantly written, and respects both time-travel noobs and the paradox sticklers. By episode's end you can already imagine how complicated the arc plot could become, but the urgency of the action and the fine chemistry of the cast leaves you wanting more. Indeed, a twist at the end of the pilot ensures you'll be back for part two.

Tara Bennett

BROADCAST UK: WEDNESDAYS ON UNIVERSAL US: MONDAYS ON FOX

Sleepy Hollow

A little bit of history repeating

THE FIRST SEASON OF SLEEPY *Hollow* was a surprise treat – a madcap, breakneck concoction of culture clash comedy, supernatural action and daft historical drama. The second season is... more of the same really. But the plotting has shifted down a gear, and not for the better.

An extended episode order (18 as opposed to last year's 13) is at the root of the problem. The relatively short run last year meant barely a minute went to waste, with breathless pacing, economic writing and imagination to spare. Eight eps in, season two still feels like it's on the starting line. The arc plot in particular has crept forward with maddeningly little haste, giving the distinct impression of a half season designed to tread water.



Part of *Sleepy Hollow*'s joy is seeing what mad monster they've dreamt up, or in most cases excavated from ancient folklore. The majority of the first season's creatures felt remarkably fresh, despite the abundance of monster-of-the-week shows that preceded it. Season two already feels like the writers are running out of ideas. A succubus, wendigo,

BONUS FEATURES

- **Taking The Myth:** The weeping woman is based on a Latin American legend about a woman who drowns her children and is prevented from entering heaven until she finds their spirits.
- **Guest Who:** *Buffy*'s Michelle Trachtenberg will appear in an upcoming episode as former First Lady Abigail Adams.
- **LMAO:** Ichabod playing a videogame with the handle IchabodCrane1749. He uses his real name online? Madness.
- **Best Line:** Ichabod: "Confounding, Henry Parish assumes the mantle of War and when he emerges it is not as a raging colossus but as an attorney."

pied piper and ersatz Frankenstein's monster are among the monsters, none of which are used in particularly creative or interesting ways. Even ol' headless, a previously imposing presence, has been crippled by transforming him into a lovesick sap.

Fortunately the odd couple at the heart of the show remains resolutely bulletproof. Ichabod and Abbie are as engaging and entertaining as ever, particularly Tom Mison's plucky Brit whose "man out of time" shtick never fails to amuse. John Noble is also a supremely welcome presence as tormented Horseman

Henry Parish, and makes up for a lot of the creature shortcomings elsewhere on the show.

"*Sleepy Hollow* might be one of the all-time great ironic titles, but at the moment this is a show in desperate need of a wake-up call.

Jordan Farley



SPURIOUS AWARDS

Celebrating the silliest moments from the month in TV



● HAIRCUT OF THE MONTH

No wonder Thea's angry on *Arrow*. That new 'do makes her look like a Troll doll!

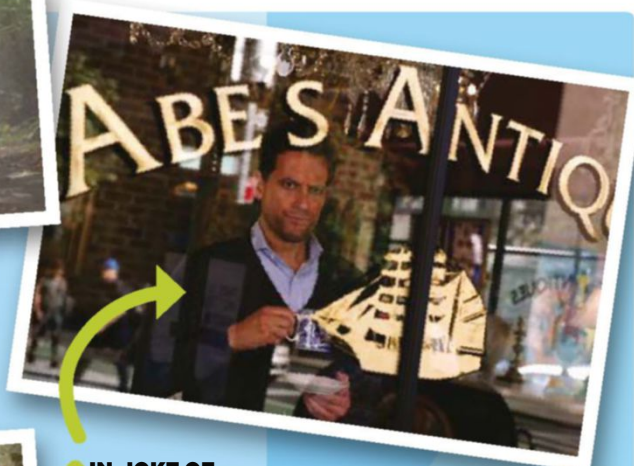
● FAR-FETCHED PHYSICS OF THE MONTH

The zombies we can buy, but this van landing on its wheels in *The Walking Dead*? No chance.



● THE WHITE STUFF OF THE MONTH

The Snow Queen's most powerful magic on *Once Upon A Time*? Trekking through the mud and emerging with a pristine white dress.



● IN-JOKE OF THE MONTH

Former Hornblower Ian Gruffudd can't even get away from ships on *Forever*. This one's in the logo of his son's antique store.

● CATCHIEST CHOON OF THE MONTH

"The Road So Far" from *Supernatural*'s superb "Fan Fiction" episode is still refusing to leave our brains.



● ROBOTS IN DISGUISE OF THE MONTH

Forget the *Mad Max* costumes, is that a Transformer back there on *The 100*?



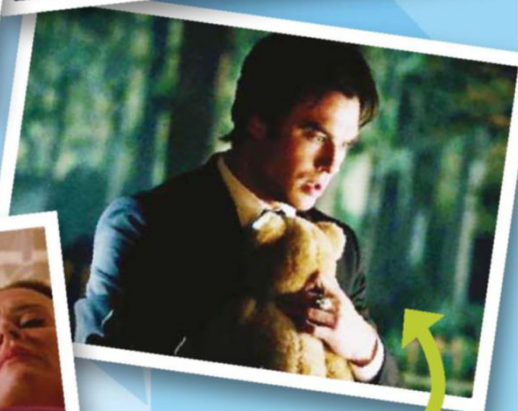
● GRAND ENTRANCE OF THE MONTH

Despite the umbrella-assisted landing we doubt Missy would make the perfect nanny on *Doctor Who*.



● BOHEMIAN RHAPSODY OF THE MONTH

We didn't have Dot pegged for a Queen fan on *American Horror Story*.



● SOFTIE OF THE MONTH

Who knew *The Vampire Diaries*' Damon was so attached to his teddy?



● EIGHTIES GAMER OF THE MONTH

Is that an arm brace or a Nintendo Power Glove on *The Flash*?



The Raiders Warehouse



Hope he made a note of where he left it.



RICHARD EDWARDS, EDITOR

It's one of cinema's all-time greatest parting shots. Indiana Jones has just saved the world from Belloq and the Nazis and recovered one of the most important archaeological finds in history. It should be a moment to whip the *Time Team* dirt-scrappers into a collective frenzy. Except it isn't, because what does the US government do with its spoils? Of course, it completely ignores the blatantly obvious fact that the Ark Of The Covenant "belongs in a museum" and packs it up in a wooden crate, just one anonymous box among thousands stacked in a giant warehouse.

It's the perfect ending to a perfect movie, simultaneously hilarious (it's bureaucracy gone mad!) and a little bit tragic – has Indy's quest really been a complete waste of time? It's a relic from a time when movies didn't always have to worry about sequel opportunities; undoubtedly an endpoint, but still ripe with potential. Ever since I first saw the movie as a kid, the scene has lingered with me. What other treasures could be in

the rest of those boxes? Who manages the warehouse? Will the Ark ever see the light of day again? And who the hell are those "top men" Major Eaton was banging on about? Surely the old fellow in the flat cap pushing the Ark to its final resting place isn't one of them...

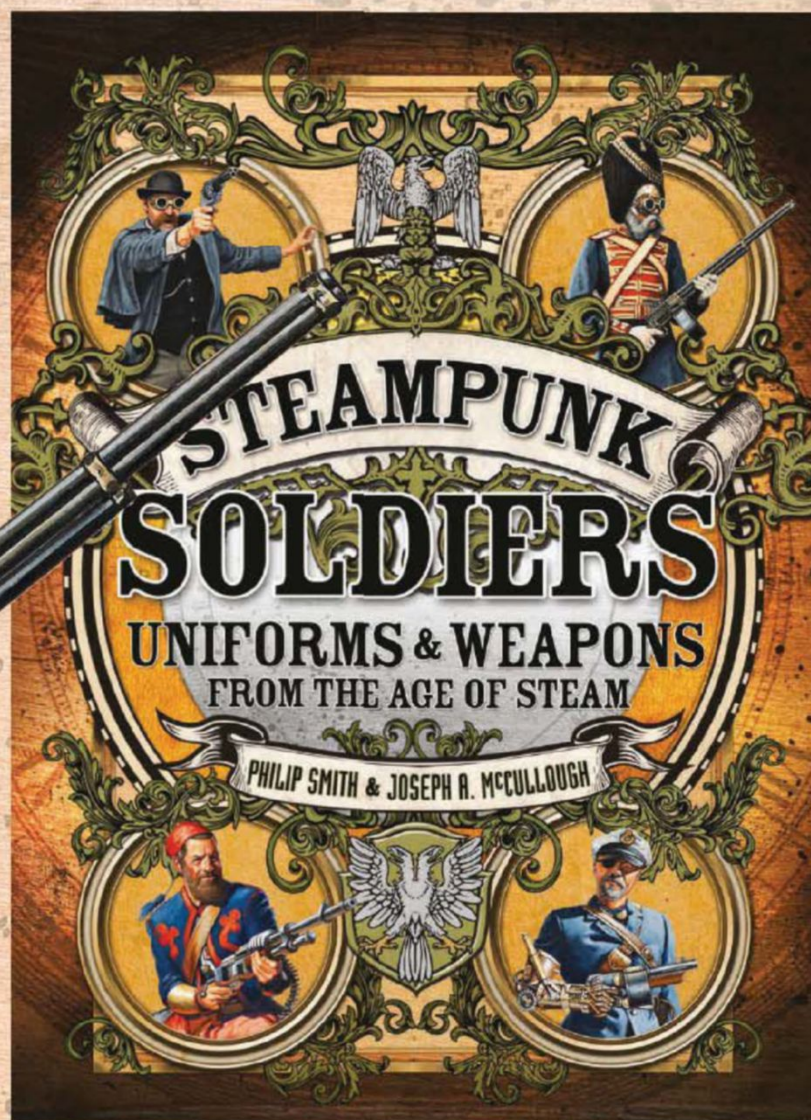
Of course, the answers to some of these questions came in the opening scenes of *Indiana Jones And The Kingdom Of The Crystal Skull*. As Soviet forces zeroed in on one of the Roswell aliens, we learned that the warehouse was located in an infamous Nevada hotspot, is called Hangar 51, and that the Ark Of The Covenant is still a resident. But despite the allusion to one of my all-time favourite movie moments, I wish Indy had never been forced to go back.

Because aside from the beautiful framing, the wonderful John Williams score, and the stunning matte painting that conveys the vastness of the storeroom, the reason the original scene works so well is the mystery. Surely we were never supposed to know too much about it. Without rooms like that there would be no *X-Files*, no "top men" to form the basis of conspiracy theories. Some doors are best left unopened. **SFX**

FACT ATTACK!

- William Hootkins, he of the "top men" talk, also played doomed pilot Perkins in the original *Star Wars*.
- Family Guy* antagonist James Woods meets a similar fate to the Ark, boxed in a warehouse to be examined – yes – by "top men".
- The long-rumoured existence of Area 51 was confirmed by the US government in August '13.
- In case you ever go looking for it, the Ark crate is numbered 9906573. That's more or less the odds against Indy crashing a truck into the Ark in *Crystal Skull*.

SEE YOU NEXT MONTH! WEDNESDAY 7 JANUARY DETAILS ON PAGE 29



Between 1887 and 1895, the British art student Miles Vancroft travelled around the world, sketching and painting the soldiers of the countries through which he passed. In this age of dramatic technological advancement, Vancroft was fascinated by how the rise of steam technology at the start of the American Civil War had transformed warfare and the role of the fighting man. This volume collects all of Vancroft's surviving paintings, along with his associated commentary on the specific military units he encountered. It is a unique pictorial guide to the last great era of bright and colourful uniforms, as well as an important historical study of the variety of steam-powered weaponry and equipment that abounded in the days before the Great War of the Worlds.

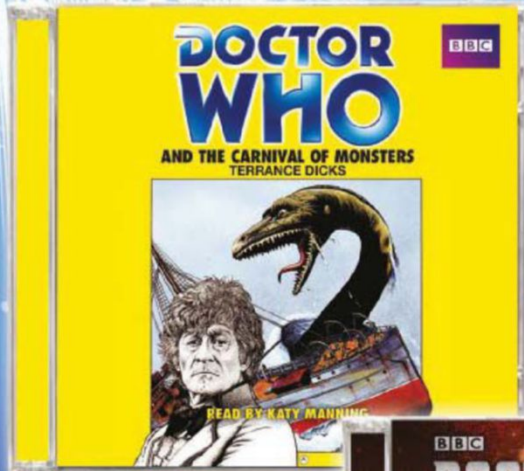
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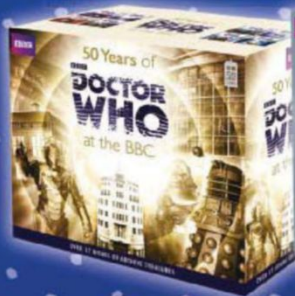


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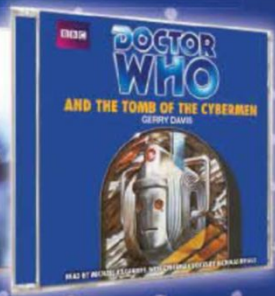
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